

**IDENTIFYING LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE STUDENTS AS GIFTED AND
TALENTED: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF ADDING A NEW MEASURE**

A Dissertation

by

LYNETTE BREEDLOVE

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2007

Major Subject: Educational Psychology

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Approved by:

Co-Chairs of Committee,	William R. Nash Joyce E. Juntune
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ABSTRACT

Identifying Linguistically Diverse Students as Gifted and Talented: A Qualitative

Study of Adding a New Measure. (August 2007)

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Co-Chairs of Advisory Committee: Dr. William R. Nash
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As the population of linguistically diverse students in schools increases, so should the representation of these students in gifted and talented programs. This is a struggle for many schools districts where the ethnic diversity in the district is not reflected in the students identified as gifted.

The objective of this study was to examine teachers' perspectives regarding students identified as gifted and talented through the addition of the Bilingual Verbal Abilities Test (BVAT) to the identification process. The researcher interviewed teachers to determine if they perceived the linguistically diverse students identified using the new measure to be gifted and talented, and what characteristics the teachers believed led to their being identified. In addition, the teachers were asked if they believed students should have been identified as gifted but were not despite the use of the new measure, and what the teachers believed were the barriers preventing identification.

The use of the BVAT resulted in the identification of students the teachers perceived to be gifted; however, teachers described a number of students who were missed. Teachers overwhelmingly described the linguistically diverse students they perceived to be gifted as having advanced language skills, particularly in reading. The

teachers rely on their experience in the classroom with students to help them determine which students to refer for testing, rather than training they have completed. The greatest barrier to identification that was identified by the teachers was language. They discussed the lack of students' language development (despite their advanced abilities) and the unusually high level of language required on standardized assessments. Finally, teachers suggested using a test preparation approach to improve the identification process, and to test linguistically diverse students for the gifted program repeatedly.

DEDICATION

To my family

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The first person I would like to thank has yet to arrive but has provided the final inspiration and motivation that I needed to get on with it. In addition, I must thank my husband, Tony, who never doubted me and continued to support me. Thank you for cooking dinner, cleaning the house, and being both parents while I commuted to class and spent “anti-social” time writing. The other member of my immediate family needs acknowledgment as well. Devon, there is nothing as motivating as an eleven-year-old asking if I brought my dissertation to work on, and reminding me that waiting outside of Boy Scouts is the perfect time to make some progress.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The objective of this study is to understand teachers' perceptions regarding the identification of gifted and talented linguistically diverse students. This study will examine teachers' perspectives regarding students identified with the use of a new measure added to the gifted and talented testing battery and how the new measure facilitated the identification of linguistically diverse students as gifted and talented. The findings of this study will be reported using the naturalistic case study method.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The under-representation of linguistically diverse students in gifted and talented programs has been recognized as a problem for decades, yet little progress has been made (Bernal, 1980; Ford & Harris, 1999; Rendon, 1996; VanTassel-Baska, Patton, & Prillaman, 1991). Many states now include references to students of special populations, including linguistically diverse students, in their policies and procedures related to gifted and talented programs (VanTassel-Baska, Patton, & Prillaman, 1991). Some states even tie funding to goals regarding underserved populations (Patton, Prillaman, & VanTassel-Baska, 1990). Texas has encouraged school districts to address this problem and show progress toward proportional representation of all groups within their gifted and talented programs (Texas Education Agency, 2000).

This dissertation follows the style of *Gifted Child Quarterly*.

Linguistically diverse students are not referred and tested for potential inclusion in gifted and talented programs in proportional numbers (Frasier, García, & Passow, 1995a; Kitano, & Kirby, 1986; Scott, Perou, Urbano, Hogan, & Gold, 1992). Identifying gifted linguistically diverse students involves teachers both within the gifted and talented program and those outside of the program in bilingual classrooms and English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms. While the students may be referred for testing by their parents, linguistically diverse students are more likely to be referred by their teachers (Scott, Perou, Urbano, Hogan, & Gold, 1992). Those students who are referred rarely qualify due to the reliance on standardized tests administered in English (Barkan & Bernal, 1991; Castellano & Díaz, 2002; Harris, 1993; Kloosterman, 1997; Leung, 1981). Researchers emphasize the need to use multiple measures and non-traditional tests, and to ensure test administrators are of the same ethnicity as the students (Ford & Harris, 1999; Frasier, García, & Passow, 1995a; Frasier et al., 1995c; Leung, 1981; Rendon, 1996; VanTassel-Baska, Patton, & Prillaman, 1991). Several researchers recommend including performance measures, yet few districts have implemented them (Frasier, García, & Passow, 1995a; Maker, Nielson, & Rogers, 1994; Sarouphim, 2004). Performance measures often require trained staff members and a considerable amount of time to implement. At a time when funding of gifted programs is being reduced, it is extremely difficult for districts to allocate the time and staff required to implement performance measures (Coleman, Gallagher, & Foster, 1994; Mills & Tissot, 1995).

To address the problem of under-representation of linguistically diverse students in gifted and talented programs, school districts must implement new measures in their traditional identification processes. If performance measures cannot be implemented, districts may turn to non-traditional tests and standardized tests administered in students' primary languages. The Bilingual Verbal Abilities Test (BVAT) is one such test, as it is a standardized test that assesses a student's verbal abilities in English and a second language in order to determine the student's combined bilingual verbal ability. The test is first administered in English, then the student has an opportunity to answer missed questions in a second language. Testing in the language other than English continues until a new ceiling is reached. The test provides an English Language Proficiency score and a bilingual verbal ability score. All scores are based on U.S. English-language norms, as the test is translated from English into 15 languages (Muñoz-Sandoval, Cummins, Alvarado, & Ruef, 1998). Adding a test such as the BVAT may improve the identification of linguistically diverse students.

RELATED LITERATURE

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2004a), Hispanics made up 13.5% of the population in the United States in 2002, 68.2% of the population was White, 11.8% was African American, 4.0% of the population was Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and 0.6% was American Indian or Alaska Native (see Table 1). The Census Bureau (2004b) projects that Hispanics will account for 24.4% of the population by

2050. In 2002, 18.3% of the United States population spoke a language other than English at home, with Spanish making up the largest part (11.1%).

According to Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) data regarding the 2003-2004 school year, the demographic information for school children in Texas varies from the U.S. Census Bureau data (Texas Education Agency, 2004). Table 1 displays a comparison of the U.S. Census data, the ethnic breakdown of Texas schools, a large suburban school district in Texas, and the GT population in that district. In Texas schools, Hispanic is the largest ethnic group, followed by White and then African American. Ethnic groups in a large suburban school district in Texas are much more balanced, although the GT program does not reflect this. The demographics of the gifted and talented program reflect the nationwide problem of under-representation.

Table 1
A Comparison of Demographic Information

Ethnicity	United States 2002	Texas Schools 2003-2004	School District 2003-2004	School District GT 2003-2004
African American	11.8%	14%	30%	15.7%
Asian/Pacific Islander	4.1%	2.9%	18%	29.5%
Hispanic	13.5%	44%	20%	7%
Native American	0.6%	0.3%	0.2%	0%
White	68.2%	39%	32%	47.7%

Note: Data from Texas Education Agency (2004) and U.S. Census Bureau (2004b)

While there has been concern regarding the under-representation of minority gifted students for some time, Ford, Baytops, and Harmon (1997) found that only 8% of

articles written about gifted and talented students between 1966 and 1996 in the ERIC database concentrated on this issue. Many of these articles discussed using nontraditional tests, multiple measures, and performance measures. Coleman, Gallagher, and Foster (1994) reviewed the policy and practices of gifted programs across the United States. They found that many district budgets were being reduced and so funding for gifted programs was in endangered. They acknowledge that “finding, identifying, and serving students [from special populations] is labor intensive and requires a strong commitment of effort and resources” (p. 24). In their survey of school districts in six states, Bermudez and Rakow (1993) found that 78% of their respondents understood that they needed to use alternative measures and 70% had implemented the use of multiple sources. However, only 32% “found their identification process successful in dealing with the identification of GT/LEPs [gifted and talented students with limited English proficiency]” (p. 103).

Maker (1983) suggested that part of the problem is that the suggested alternatives often lack data on their reliability and validity. Mills and Tissot (1995) concur, having stated “None of these alternative measures has been found to be an adequate measure of the skills and aptitudes necessary for high-level academic achievement” (p. 210). In addition, Mills & Tissot (1995) acknowledged that objective tests are an efficient way to screen students for gifted and talented programs. As there is a “lack of instruments which can detect giftedness in minority language students” (Cohen, 1988, p. 3), Barkan and Bernal (1991) and Scott, Deuel, Jean-Francois, and Urbano (1996) suggested the development of new tests to aid in the identification of the

specific populations that are often under-represented. Zappia (1989) stressed the importance of matching the test administrator's ethnicity to that of the test taker. This would help to avoid Taylor and Lee's (1987) situational bias where test administrator and test taker follow different social communication rules. Further, Bernal (1989) and González, Bauerle, and Féliz-Holt (1994) recommended that linguistically diverse students be tested in both their primary and secondary languages.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Despite the implementation of the BVAT, Hispanic students for whom Spanish was their first language continued to be under-identified. Of the students identified through the use of the BVAT in the 2002-2003 school year, only 17% were Spanish speakers. As teachers had been trained to administer the test and were now very interested in the problem of under-identification, the researcher believed they might be able to provide crucial information about the problem and potential solutions. Therefore, this study will examine the teachers' perspectives of the effectiveness of a bilingual standardized test in the identification of gifted and talented linguistically diverse students. The results of this study will provide guidance to school districts that are trying to improve the identification of gifted linguistically diverse students.

Research Questions

The following questions will guide this investigation:

1. Do teachers perceive the linguistically diverse students identified using the new measure to be gifted and talented? If so, what factors led to their being identified?
2. Are there linguistically diverse students teachers perceive to be gifted and talented who were not identified? If so, what barriers prevented their identification?

LIMITATIONS

The goal of a qualitative study is to provide a thick description of a phenomenon and from that transferability is possible, rather than generalization. This study seeks to describe the teachers' view of linguistically diverse students identified as gifted and talented through the use of a bilingual standardized test as part of the testing battery. The findings may influence the continued use of the test as part of the identification process and other revision of the identification process utilized by the school district. The findings may also affect the implementation of staff development to train teachers in selecting linguistically diverse students to refer for testing. Other school districts with similar demographics may be able to transfer the findings for similar purposes.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Linguistically diverse students – These are students who speak multiple languages and usually acquired English as a second language. These students are often served in public school systems by bilingual programs or programs such as English as a Second Language (ESL). This term has been adapted from Castellano and Diaz (2002) who describe this population as culturally and linguistically diverse. As language was the most discussed factor, this study will focus on the linguistic aspects rather than the cultural aspects of the diversity.

Gifted and talented students – The large suburban school district in Texas in which this study takes place uses the definition of gifted and talented students that is established in Texas Education Code §29.121. The code defines a gifted and talented student as

a child or youth who performs at or shows the potential for performing at a remarkably high level of accomplishment when compared to others of the same age, experience, or environment and who:

- (1) exhibits higher performance capability in an intellectual, creative, or artistic area;
- (2) possesses an unusual capacity for leadership; or
- (3) excels in a specific academic field. (Texas Education Agency, 2000, p. 11)

Prolonged engagement – The researcher must interact with respondents over a prolonged period of time in order to learn the culture of the situation, investigate

possible misinformation, and to build trust with respondents. In this study, the interaction will take place over a one to three month period of time.

Triangulation – To establish trustworthiness, the researcher must verify information through the use of multiple sources or multiple methods. Specific pieces of data are checked against one another.

Transferability – Due to similarities, readers are able to apply findings of the study to other situations and/or contexts.

Unit (unitize) – The constant comparison method requires the researcher to separate data into the smallest pieces of information that can stand alone. The units may be of various lengths, but contain a complete idea.

DISSERTATION DESIGN

The following chapters will detail this study and the findings by the researcher. Chapter II will provide a review of related literature, providing the reader with the foundation on which this study is based. Next will follow a detailed description of the methodology used. The fourth chapter will include a thick description of the interviews that were conducted, including a description of each participant. Finally, the reader will be provided with a summary of the emergent themes and a discussion of how the data collected addresses each research question.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

GIFTED EDUCATION

The history of gifted education can be traced back for centuries. Colangelo and Davis trace evidence of programs serving gifted students to the 1800s (Colangelo & Davis, 2003). However, it was not until 1971 when Sidney Marland, U.S. Commissioner of Education, wrote a report for Congress that the first federal definition of gifted and talented was established.

Gifted and talented children are those identified by professionally qualified persons who by virtue of outstanding abilities are capable of high performance. These are children who require differentiated educational programs and services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize their contributions to self and society.

Children capable of high performance include those with demonstrated achievement and/or potential ability in any of the following areas, singly or in combination:

- 1) General intellectual ability
- 2) Specific academic aptitude
- 3) Creative or productive thinking
- 4) Leadership ability
- 5) Visual and performing arts

6) Psychomotor ability. (p. I-3-I-4)

This definition has been refined over the years by various educational commissions, but the essence of the definition has remained intact. There are students who have the capacity to perform significantly beyond their peers, they need services not usually provided in the regular educational system, and there are several different types of giftedness. These main points are included in a more recent federal definition that was published in *National Excellence: A Case for Developing America's Talent*. This report was published by U.S. Department of Education in 1993.

Children and youth with outstanding talent perform or show the potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment.

These children and youth exhibit high performance capability in intellectual, creative, and /or artistic areas, possess an unusual leadership capacity, or excel in specific academic fields. They require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the schools.

Outstanding talents are present in children and youth from all cultural groups, across the economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor. (p. 3)

A notable addition to this definition is the final sentence emphasizing that giftedness occurs in all populations.

Many states have based their definitions of gifted and talented on these federal definitions. The Texas definition, established in Texas Education Code §29.121, is no exception.

‘Gifted and talented student’ means a child or youth who performs at or shows the potential for performing at a remarkably high level of accomplishment when compared to others of the same age, experience, or environment and who:

- 1) exhibits high performance capability in an intellectual, creative, or artistic area;
- 2) possesses an unusual capacity for leadership; or
- 3) excels in a specific academic field. (Texas Education Agency, 2000, p. 11)

This definition closely matches the federal definition of 1993. Texas began requiring districts to identify and serve gifted and talented (GT) student in 1987 (Texas Education Agency, 2007). Since that time the *Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students* was established to guide districts in establishing programs and as a document of accountability. It contains sections on Program Design, Curriculum, Student Assessment, Professional Development, and Family-Community Involvement. Each section describes minimal expectations for gifted and talented programs in Texas, along with suggestions for program improvement. Rather than provide very specific parameters, the *State Plan* contains a set of guidelines allowing districts the freedom to establish programs that best fit the needs of their specific students. (Texas Education Agency, 2000)

The section on Student Assessment provides districts with guidelines for identifying students as gifted and talented. These general guidelines include screening students for the program once a year, assessing students in Kindergarten through 12th grade, collecting information from multiple sources, using at least three criteria

including both quantitative and qualitative measures for each area of giftedness identified and subsequently served, and the requirement that selection decisions be made by a committee of three trained educators. There are two guidelines designed to ensure equity in gifted programs. One of these is the requirement that students be assessed in “languages they understand or with nonverbal tests.” The other is that “data and procedures assure that all populations of the district have access to assessment and, if identified, services offered as part of the program for gifted students.” (Texas Education Agency, 2000, p. 4) Despite these guidelines, the demographics of gifted and talented programs rarely match those of the districts within which they operate.

THE PROBLEM OF UNDER-REPRESENTATION

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Hispanics made up 13.5% of the population in the United States in 2002. 68.2% of the population was White, 11.8% was Black or African American, 4.0% of the population was Asian, 0.6% was American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0.1% was Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. The Census Bureau projects that Hispanics will account for 24.4% of the population by 2050. In 2002, 18.3% of the United States population spoke a language other than English at home, with Spanish making up the largest part (11.1%).

In a large suburban county in southeast Texas, the percentage of non-Whites was even higher in 2002. Whites accounted for only 44% of the population. Hispanics made up 21.7% of the population in the county, 19.6 % was Black or African American, 13.5% of the population was Asian, 0.3% was American Indian or Alaska Native, and

0.1% was Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. Rarely do gifted and talented programs reflect this level of diversity. Instead, they tend to contain an overrepresentation of White and Asian students, and an under-representation of Black and Hispanic Students. In the 2004-2005 school year, Hispanic students made up 46% of students enrolled in Texas yet they made up only 34% of the gifted population Texas. Black students represented 14% of the total school population and only 9% of the GT population in Texas schools (Slocumb & Olenchak, 2006).

The under-representation of linguistically diverse students in gifted and talented programs has been recognized as a problem for decades, yet little progress has been made (Bernal, 1980; Ford & Harris, 1999; Rendon, 1996; VanTassel-Baska, Patton, & Prillaman, 1991). Based on data from the Office of Civil Rights, Ford and Harris (1999) found that the under-representation of Hispanic students increased from 25% in 1978, when Hispanic students represented 6.8% of the student population but only 5.2% of the gifted population, to 42% in 1992 as their population in the United States increased to 13.7% of the population but only 7.9% of the gifted population. The under-representation of Black students also increased, from 33% in 1978 to 41% in 1992. Interestingly, they found the under-representation of Black students peaked at 57% in 1982. VanTassel-Baska, Patton, and Prillaman (1991) reported that 30% of public schools were made up of students from minority populations, yet they represented less than 20% of the gifted and talented students.

The problem is so pervasive that in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 2002, the priorities of the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and

Talented Students Education Program shifted to “encourage activities that contribute to an understanding of the most effective ways to educate gifted and talented students who are economically disadvantaged, limited English proficient, or who have disabilities” (Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, “Purpose” Web site). Prior to this, Texas recognized the problem. Beginning in 1996, the *Texas Administrative Code* specifically required that “students from all populations in the district have access to assessment and, if identified, services for the gifted/talented program” (Texas Education Agency, 2000, p. 13). As mentioned before, the *Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted /Talented Students* contains guidelines to address equity. In addition, it encourages districts to adopt policies and practices that lead to gifted and talented programs that reflect the demographics of the district, as meeting this goal is a requirement to attain an “Exemplary” rating for the GT program and making progress toward the goal is required for the program to be rated “Recognized” (Texas Education Agency, 2000). Other states also include references to students of special populations, including linguistically diverse students, in their policies and procedures related to gifted and talented.

In 1990, Patton, Prillaman, and VanTassel-Baska surveyed all 50 states and two US territories. All but one state responded. Their survey revealed that all but three states had programs for disadvantaged gifted learners, but 90.4% relied on traditional tests to identify gifted students. In addition, 40.4% indicated a moderate to great use of nontraditional approaches to identify disadvantaged students. Some states even tied funding to goals regarding underserved populations. In a 1991 study, VanTassel-Baska,

Patton, and Prillaman surveyed local agencies in addition to the state level and found that 52.1% of their local respondents used nontraditional identification measures, and thirteen states used linguistic factors in their definitions of disadvantaged students. Coleman, Gallagher, and Foster (1994) had similar findings in their investigation of state policies related to the identification of gifted students. While 49 states used standardized IQ and achievement tests, 46 also used additional information such as portfolios and products. They found 40 states specifically mentioned students learning English as a second language (ESL) within their special populations groups. Yet, underrepresentation of linguistically diverse students in gifted programs remains a problem.

Reduced Nominations

Proportional numbers of linguistically diverse students are not referred to be tested for potential inclusion in gifted and talented programs (Frasier, García, & Passow, 1995a; Kitano, & Kirby, 1986; Scott, Perou, Urbano, Hogan, & Gold, 1992). Finding gifted linguistically diverse students involves teachers both within the gifted and talented program and those outside of the program in bilingual classrooms and ESL classrooms. While the students may be referred for testing by their parents, linguistically students are more likely to be referred by their teachers. Scott, Perou, Urbano, Hogan, and Gold (1992) surveyed parents of White, Black, and Hispanic students in the GT program of a large urban school district in Florida. The survey asked parents about their awareness of their children's giftedness, their roles in their children being placed in the GT program, and the characteristics of their children that led them to

believe their children were gifted. Significantly more Black and White parents reported being aware of their children's giftedness than Hispanic parents. A significantly higher percentage of White parents referred their children for testing for the GT program. Interestingly, however, the researchers found a great deal of similarity in parents' descriptions of their children. They suggested public education programs to help parents of Black and Hispanic students identify characteristics of gifted children and to encourage them to refer their children for evaluation for gifted and talented programs.

Frasier, García, and Passow (1995a) also describe the lower incidence of parent referrals by parents of minority populations as a contributor to the problem of under-representation. They suggest that parents are limited in the information they have about GT programs and tend not to participate as widely in advocacy groups supporting gifted programs. These researchers also suggest that the lower incidence of referrals is due to decreased referrals by teachers. Their review of the research indicated to them that teachers tend to have low expectations for all linguistically diverse students and therefore overlook members of the group who might be gifted. This two part contribution to lower referral rates, lack of parent referrals and lack of teacher referrals, is also described by Kitano and Kirby (1986), even in more homogenous neighborhoods primarily composed of minority families.

Reliance on Standardized Testing

Those students who are referred rarely qualify for GT programs due to the reliance on standardized tests administered in English (Barkan & Bernal, 1991;

Castellano & Díaz, 2002; Harris, 1993; Kloosterman, 1997; Leung, 1981). Most researchers link the under-representation of specific groups in GT programs to districts' extensive reliance on standardized tests to identify students as gifted and talented (Bermúdez & Rakow, 1993; Bernal, 2002; Clark, 1997; Ford, 2003; Ford & Harris, 1999; Frasier, García, & Passow, 1995a; Maker, 1996; Maker, Nielson & Rogers, 1994; Mills & Tissot, 1995; Sarouphim, 2004). Ford (2003) indicates that the vast majority of school districts use standardized tests as their primary method of identifying students as gifted and talented. She indicates that this is a significant factor in the under-representation of linguistically diverse students. Ford states that Black and Hispanic students tend to score a full standard deviation below White students on these assessments. This will reduce the number of students who can reach the threshold set by districts for identification, generally two standard deviations above the mean. Ford describes discrepancies between the means for these different groups for the WISC-R, the Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children, and the SAT. Frasier, García & Passow (1995a) indicate the debate on test bias is inconclusive. They recognize significant research on both sides of the argument. However, they caution against the use of tests with populations for which they were not designed, for example English-based tests administered to students with limited English proficiency (LEP).

Part of the problem indicated by researchers in the use of standardized tests is that they are usually developed and administered in English, making it particularly difficult for linguistically diverse students, especially those designated as LEP, to score high enough to qualify for GT services (Castellano & Díaz, 2002; Kloosterman, 1997;

Leung, 1981; Zappia, 1989). Usually, linguistically diverse students must wait until they have mastered English to be referred and tested for GT programs (Barkan & Bernal, 1991; Uresti, Goertz, & Bernal, 2002). Barkan and Bernal (1991) emphasize that “one does not have to be fluent in English to be intelligent” (p. 144). Therefore, waiting for students to acquire English at a level high enough to test into the program does not provide for their advanced academic needs and is not equitable. Linguistically diverse students are unlikely to be able to express themselves well in English and therefore English assessments are inappropriate according to Cohen (1988). Instead she suggests testing students in their native languages. Zappia (1989) suggests that second language learners may appear to be quite advanced in their language acquisition, but they may have only reached high levels in their basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS). In contrast, standardized testing requires a high level of development in cognitive academic language proficiency skills (CALPS). Teachers may not recognize the difference until poor standardized test results in the student’s second language are acquired.

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

Multiple Measures

While there has been concern regarding the under-representation of minority gifted students for some time, Ford, Baytops, and Harmon (1997) found that only 8% of articles written about gifted and talented students between 1966 and 1996 in the ERIC database concentrated on this issue. Many of these articles discuss using nontraditional

tests, multiple measures, and performance measures. Researchers suggest that districts move to using multiple sources and multiple criteria for identifying students for gifted and talented programs rather than relying entirely on one standardized test administration (Ford, 2003; Ford & Harris, 1999; Ford, Baytops, & Harmon, 1997; Frasier, García, & Passow, 1995a; Frasier et al., 1995c; Kitano & Kirby, 1986; Rendon, 1996). “No one piece of information is sufficient for identifying students’ strengths, weaknesses, and education needs. Thus, no one instrument should be used to include or exclude a student from placement. Instead, a comprehensive and holistic profile of students must be developed” (Ford, Baytops, & Harmon, 1997, p. 206). These researchers suggest the profile contain information from both qualitative and quantitative measures, as well as from a variety of sources. Frasier, García, & Passow (1995a) recognize the important of using multiple measures, although they caution educators to select the measures purposefully and to carefully determine how they contribute to the identification process. Data from multiple measures must be combined in ways that results in valid decision-making. However, seeking information from sources that provide information about traits not measured on standardized tests of ability and achievement are highly valuable according to Renzulli and Delcourt (1986). These sources might include portfolios or case studies, parent interviews, and behavioral checklists (Rendon, 1996). They might also include performance measures.

Maker (1996), Maker, Nielson and Rogers (1994), and Sarouphim (2004), recommended using performance-based measures like the one they have developed called DISCOVER. Performance-based measures usually require a trained team of

observers who assign students tasks, observe how students approach the tasks and their solutions, and rate students on their performances. The DISCOVER process involves students completing a series of activities, some of which are done in small groups with a trained observer. In the first activity, students build objects as directed by the observer, and then build their own creations. In the second activity, they are directed to solve a series of tangram puzzles that progress in difficulty level. In the third group activity, students are given toys to use as the basis of creating an oral story. In addition to these three observed tasks, students are asked to complete a math worksheet with a range of mathematical problems and to do some creative writing. Maker and her colleagues have found the DISCOVER process to assist in identifying appropriately representative groups and to identify students who perform on par with students identified through more traditional methods (Maker, Nielson and Rogers, 1994).

Although Maker and her colleagues recommend including performance measures, few districts have implemented them with success (Frasier, García, & Passow, 1995a; Maker, Nielson, & Rogers, 1994; Sarouphim, 2004). Coleman, Gallagher, and Foster (1994) reviewed the policy and practices of gifted programs across the United States. They found that many district budgets were being reduced and funding for the gifted was endangered. They acknowledged that “finding, identifying, and serving students [from special populations] is labor intensive and requires a strong commitment of effort and resources” (p. 24). At a time when funding of gifted programs is being reduced, it is extremely difficult to allocate the time and staff required to implement performance measures (Coleman, Gallagher, & Foster, 1994; Mills & Tissot,

1996). Bermúdez and Rakow (1993) surveyed five hundred public school GT coordinators in six states with high percentages of Hispanic students. The researchers collected responses from 268 coordinators. Of these, 78% recognized the need to use different means of assessment in order to find gifted LEP students and 70% reported the use of multiple sources. However, only 32% “found their identification process successful in dealing with the identification of GT/LEPs [gifted and talented students with limited English proficiency]” (p. 103).

Alternative Testing

Maker (1983) suggested that part of the problem is that the suggested alternatives often lack data on their reliability and validity. “None of these alternative measures has been found to be an adequate measure of the skills and aptitudes necessary for high-level academic achievement” (Mills & Tissot, 1995, p. 210). In addition, Mills & Tissot (1995) acknowledged that objective tests are an efficient way to screen students for gifted and talented programs and Frasier, García and Passow (1995a) noted that test developers are now more aware of the need for fair instruments. As there is a “lack of instruments which can detect giftedness in minority language students” (Cohen, 1988, p. 3), Barkan and Bernal (1991) and Scott, Deuel, Jean-Francois, and Urbano (1996) suggested the development of new tests that will aid in the identification of specific populations.

According to Taylor and Lee (1987), there are five types of culturally and linguistically based biases that must be addressed regarding standardized testing. The

first of these, situation bias, occurs when there is a difference between the test taker and the test administrator regarding social rules of language. Leung (1981) suggested that standardized tests be translated or at least administered by someone of the same ethnicity as the test taker. Zappia (1989) stressed the importance of matching the test administrator's ethnicity to that of the test taker. The second bias is linguistic, which occurs when a student with limited English proficiency is tested in English. Cohen (1988) and Irby and Lara-Alecio (1996) recommended assessing students in their native languages, which avoids this type of bias. The difficulty is in finding valid and reliable standardized assessments in languages other than English. Taylor and Lee's third type of bias is communication style bias. Communication style bias occurs when the test taker is expected to respond in ways that are culturally incongruous. Again, testing in a native language or matching the test administrator to the test taker may help prevent conflict. Cognitive style bias is when a test requires the demonstration of an ability that is culturally incompatible with the test taker, and test interpretation bias relates to comparing a test taker's scores to a norm group that is not representative of the test taker. Each type of bias is important to take into account when selecting and administering standardized tests for linguistically diverse students.

Nonverbal tests which do not require proficiency in English or any other language (Ford, 2003; Ford, Baytops, & Harris, 1997; Leung, 1981; Mills & Tissot, 1995) or other alternative or nontraditional tests (Frasier, García, & Passow, 1995a; VanTassel-Baska, Patton, & Prillaman, 1991) are suggested as alternatives to traditional standardized tests. Nonverbal tests often avoid Taylor and Lee's (1987) biases. Ford

(2003) suggests that the Naglieri Nonverbal Abilities Test and the Raven's Progressive Matrices are the most promising culturally sensitive instruments available. They allow students to show intellectual reasoning abilities without the interference of language or cultural symbol systems. Kitano and Kirby (1986) suggest the use of the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking (TTCT) as an alternative assessment as it has shown little difference in scores among varying populations. Rendon (1996) also recommends the TTCT, as well as the Structure of the Intellect (SOI) test which is highly diagnostic and can identify both areas of extreme strength and areas that may be come so with purposeful training.

Bernal (1980, 1981, 1989) and González, Bauerle, and Félix-Holt (1994) suggested testing students in both their first and second languages. "A bilingual child may know more than he may be able to produce verbally in his dominant language" (Gonzalez, Bauerle, & Feliz-Holt, 1994, p. 50). For this reason, Muñoz-Sandoval, Cummins, Alvarado, and Ruef (1998) developed the Bilingual Verbal Abilities Test (BVAT). The BVAT is designed to measure a child's bilingual ability in a combined format, which may be better than measuring two languages alone. The test requires test administrators who are fluent in English and other languages. This requirement encourages the matching of the ethnicity of the test giver to the test taker. As it is administered individually and orally, the test giver can adjust the pacing and social interaction pattern to meet the needs of the test taker.

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS

Hunsaker, Frasier, Frank, Finley, and Klekotka (1995) investigated teachers' perceptions of students identified as gifted using an alternative identification process. The alternatively identified students were rated by teachers to perform at the same level as traditionally identified students in most areas. The teachers rated linguistically diverse students higher in their interactions with others than the traditionally identified students, and lower in critical thinking. The researchers found no bias against the alternatively identified linguistically diverse students on the part of the teachers.

Bermúdez and Rakow (1990) investigated teachers' perceptions of the identification of gifted Hispanic LEP students. They compared survey responses of teachers in bilingual and ESL classrooms to teachers in regular education classrooms. The results of the survey indicated that regular classroom teachers were less aware of the inadequacies in identification processes in identifying Hispanic LEP students as gifted, less aware of the difficulties these students face in communicating in English, and less aware of the importance of a solid foundation in students' first languages. The researchers concluded that regular education teachers are less likely to see giftedness in bilingual children than bilingual teachers who were more aware of the issues. Frasier et al. (1995b) surveyed 750 teachers nationwide and found that teachers perceived standardized tests to be a major barrier to the identification of linguistically diverse students. The teachers also perceived that they were limited in their abilities to accurately recognize giftedness in LEP students. Fernandez, Gay, Lucky and Gavilan (1998) asked teachers to rate the importance of specific characteristics in identifying

gifted students in general and Hispanic LEP students. They gave two groups of teachers the same list of characteristics but with different headings. One heading indicated the list contained characteristics of gifted students; the other indicated the list contained characteristics of gifted Hispanic LEP students. Teachers were asked to rate the importance of each characteristic and the researchers compared the rankings of the characteristics of the two groups. The researchers found that teachers' ratings of which characteristics were most important in identifying gifted students for both lists matched those characteristics listed in the literature. And those characteristics that were rated as most important and least important were the same for both lists. However, the teachers rated certain language related characteristics more important for gifted students in general than for gifted Hispanic LEP students, characteristics such as a large vocabulary and oral expression. Yet, teachers rated the ability to speak multiple languages fluently higher for Hispanic LEP students than for gifted students in general. The researchers concluded that teachers appeared to be less certain of characteristics for gifted Hispanic LEP students, and their ratings of students may depend on knowing the students' backgrounds.

SUMMARY

To address the problem of under-representation of linguistically diverse students in gifted and talented programs, school districts must implement new measures in their traditional identification processes, actively recruit referrals of these students, and train teachers in the special issues regarding identification of linguistically diverse students.

If performance measures cannot be implemented, districts may turn to non-traditional tests and standardized tests administered in students' primary languages. Adding a test such as the Bilingual Verbal Abilities Test (BVAT) may improve the identification of linguistically diverse students.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The qualitative case study method was chosen for this study because it allows the researcher to build a holistic picture of the phenomenon being studied from the perspective of teachers who share an experience. The problem of under-representation of linguistically diverse students as gifted is a long standing one. Quantitative studies have confirmed the problem exists. And although these studies have resulted in suggestions to improve the identification process, little progress has made in changing the demographics of gifted and talented programs. Because the qualitative case study method allows the researcher to build a “thick description” of the problem and then analyze all the data collected for emergent themes, the phenomenon will be more fully explained and new solutions may potentially be found. According to Miles and Huberman (1994) the processes of qualitative research “help researchers to get beyond initial conceptions and to generate or revise conceptual frameworks” (p. 1).

Many school districts rely heavily on the referral of students to initiate the identification process for their gifted and talented programs. These referrals come from a variety of sources, one of which is classroom teachers. An important aspect of this study is determining how teachers of bilingual students describe gifted and talented students and how they decided which students to refer for testing. How teachers define giftedness impacts their judgment of whether an identified student is actually gifted and talented, too. Using qualitative methods to gather this information provides the best opportunity to build a thorough picture of this complex activity. Lincoln and Guba

(1985) describe qualitative research as the best way to deal with problems in which there are “multiple realities.” Certainly this is a problem with multiple realities.

Discussing the problems related to identifying gifted and talented linguistically diverse students directly with the teachers who interact with the students daily provides an opportunity to examine the issue from the perspective of those who are closest to the issue, those who are inside the phenomenon. Such discussions provide insight into the problem from a different perspective than numbers and statistics can provide. Instead, the story of the problem can be told and examined for possible solutions. The words of those on the inside can be analyzed for emergent themes. The emergent design aspect of qualitative study, the unfolding of new questions and the uncovering of common themes, is the best fit for a study investigating a complex phenomenon involving multiple realities because a predetermined design would be limited to what the researcher already knows about the problem (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

HUMAN AS INSTRUMENT

This study utilized human-as-instrument. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), there are several characteristics “that uniquely qualify the human as the instrument of choice for naturalistic inquiry” (p. 193). These characteristics include:

- 1) the human ability to adapt to the environment and respondents in order to more fully investigate a phenomenon
- 2) the human ability to understand and gather information at multiple levels and to understand its holistic context

- 3) the human ability to make both intuitive and logical, informed decisions in order to probe responses for clarification or further explanation
- 4) the human ability to explore unusual responses immediately for a deeper understanding.

PARTICIPANTS

Initially, nineteen elementary (first through fifth grade) teachers from two campuses of a large suburban school district in Texas were invited to participate in this study. Fourteen of these teachers were part of the bilingual program on their campuses, the remaining five were not bilingual teachers but taught either regular education classes or classes in the GT program. These teachers were selected to participate because they met one of the following criteria:

- a. In the 2003-2004 school year, the teacher delivered instruction to linguistically diverse students who were tested for the GT program using the BVAT in the spring of 2003.
- b. In the 2002-2003 school year, the teacher delivered instruction to linguistically diverse students who were referred for GT testing and were administered the Bilingual Verbal Abilities Test (BVAT) in the spring of 2003.

Teachers at two campuses were selected to participate in this study. Although twenty-three campuses in this large suburban school district administered the BVAT to students referred for the GT program who were also receiving ESL or bilingual services, only five of these campuses tested Hispanic students and identified at least one

of them as gifted and talented. Due to the emphasis by the State of Texas and this school district in the identification of Hispanic students, this study focused on students who were tested in Spanish. Campuses serving students through an ESL model were excluded from this study, since those teachers serve students whose home languages vary. It would be difficult for teachers to separate their beliefs and experiences in order to respond to interview questions regarding Hispanic students only when they teach students of varied ethnicity with limited English proficiency. Excluding ESL campuses excludes one of the five campuses from the study. At another of the five campuses, the only student who was tested and subsequently identified as GT withdrew from the school district before services could begin. For that reason, the campus was excluded from this study. Of the three remaining campuses, one did not follow district guidelines in identifying students as gifted and talented. This was true of both students tested with the BVAT and those given the usual GT battery. This campus was excluded from this study as the campus deviated from district guidelines and does not represent the usual practices in the district. Therefore, teachers at two campuses were invited to participate in this study.

After the interviews began, two additional teachers were invited to participate in the study. During an interview with one participant, it was discovered that she had a teaching partner. The participant taught her class during half of the day, and her partner taught the same class for the remainder of the day. Therefore, the partner met the criteria for participation in the study and was invited to participate. Similarly, it was discovered that another pair of teachers had a third partner in their teaching team who

had not originally been on the list of potential participants. He was immediately invited to participate when it was discovered he also met the criteria for participants.

Of the 21 teachers invited to participate, three chose not to participate. They simply did not respond to any request for their participation. One of the participants declined an interview but chose to respond to several questions sent through electronic mail. This participant's responses were included in the study. Table 2 provides a summary of basic information about the participants.

Table 2
Participant Information

P#	School	Sex	Ethnicity	GL	Code Name	Country of Origin	Type	GT Hours	Years Tching
1	Cliff	F	C	4	Ms. Safstrom	America	Bil	0	10
2	Pheasant	F	C	2	Ms. Ingle	America	GT	30	28
3	Pheasant	M	H	2	Mr. Nozaro	Venezuela	Bil	30	
4	Cliff	M	H	K	Mr. Ignacio	Spain	Bil	30	19
5	Cliff	F	H	1	Ms. Trevino	America	Bil	30	7
6	Cliff	F	B	4	Ms. Zot	America	GT	30	5
7	Pheasant	F	C	5	Ms. Orland	America	GT	30	11
8	Pheasant	F	H	4	Ms. Pena	America	Bil	30	14
9	Cliff	M	H	4	Mr. Xapato	Mexico	Bil	0	2
10	Cliff	M	H	3	Mr. Smith	Mexico	Bil	0	3
11	Cliff	F	H	3	Ms. Interado	Mexico	Bil	30	20
12	Cliff	F	H	2	Ms. Loring	Mexico	Bil	6	8
13	Cliff	F	H	1	Ms. Uvalde	Columbia	Bil	0	2
14	Cliff	F	H	K	Ms. Zapada	Spain	Bil	0	4
15	Pheasant	F	H	1	Ms. Hernandez	America	Bil	0	11
16	Cliff	M	H	1	Mr. Gomez	Mexico	Bil	0	8
17	Cliff	M	H	4	Mr. Ortiz	Mexico	Bil	0	4
18	Cliff	F	H	1	Ms. Horacio	Spain	Bil		6

Note: B=Black, C=Caucasian, H=Hispanic; GL=Grade Level; Bil = Bilingual

Of the 18 participants, three taught classrooms as part of the gifted and talented program and were not involved in the bilingual program. The remaining 15 teachers taught in the bilingual program. The majority of the teachers are Hispanic and eleven of them emigrated from other countries, including Mexico, Spain, Columbia, and Venezuela. All of the Hispanic teachers and one Caucasian teacher taught in the bilingual program. Five of the teachers taught at Pheasant Elementary. The remaining 13 taught at Cliff Elementary. All of the GT teachers had completed 30 hours of training in gifted education as required by the *Texas Administrative Code* for teachers of the gifted. In addition, five of the bilingual teachers had completed the entire 30 hours of training. One teacher had completed only six hours of training. The years of experience varies greatly among these teachers, ranging from two to 28 years.

Several of the participants were familiar with the researcher. As Coordinator of the Gifted and Talented Program, the researcher conducted professional development in gifted education and served as a resource for problem-solving issues with students. In addition, two of the participants assisted in administering the BVAT to referred students and had worked with the researcher in that capacity.

PROCEDURES

In the 2002-2003 school year, 21 bilingual students at Cliff Elementary and Pheasant Elementary were referred and tested for the gifted and talented program. Two were identified as needing GT services. The participants in this study each taught at least one of the 21 students who were referred and tested. The participants were selected

for this study based on their contact with these students either the year the students were referred or the year after.

Data was gathered through the use of unstructured interviews. The interviews lasted from 60 to 90 minutes and centered around the questions on the Interview Protocol provided in Appendix A. All interviews were tape recorded using a small unobtrusive recording device. Observational notes were taken during the interview to document nonverbal behaviors, especially those used to clarify or emphasize something the participant was communicating. After transcription of the recordings, the observational notes were added to form more complete records of the interviews. The interviews were scheduled at the convenience of the participants. Fifteen of the interviews were conducted at the participants' schools. All but one took place in the participants' classrooms after school hours. One was conducted during the school day seated at a table in a hall. Two interviews were conducted in the researcher's office at the district administration building after school hours. Interview time and location was the choice of the participants. Follow-up discussions were attempted with two participants. Only one responded despite numerous attempts. Following each interview a member check was conducted to insure that the information was correct. Peer debriefing occurred during all aspects of the study, but particularly during the analysis of the data. This provided the researcher with various opportunities to build foundational knowledge, refocus the process and analysis, and to sound out answers to questions that emerged in the research process.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The analysis of data occurs constantly throughout the life of a qualitative study. Even during the interviews, the researcher analyzes what is being said by the participant to determine if additional questions are needed and in what direction to take the interview to gain as much understanding as possible. A part of the analysis is also data reduction. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), data reduction is “the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data...which occurs constantly throughout the life of any qualitative project” (pg. 10).

The data from the interview transcripts and the observational notes were analyzed using the systematic process of unitizing. Unitizing is an act of data reduction. It is combing through the text of an interview looking for meaningful “chunks” that stand alone. These may be as short as two or three words or much longer. The units in this study were printed on four-by-six index cards and coded. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) have mentioned, this process resulted in several hundreds of cards being generated.

Each card was coded to make it easy to trace back to the original transcript. The code included the participant number, the page number of the transcript, whether the participant taught GT or bilingual, the gender of the participant, whether the participant taught students before or after they were tested for the GT program, whether they taught students who were identified as GT, and whether English or Spanish was the participant’s first language. When the coding system was initially determined, it was

unclear what information would become important in the analysis due to the emergent nature of the research process.

Once all the cards were prepared, the researcher began thinking about how to best deal with data from eighteen participants in a way that would be meaningful and eventually clear to a reader. Through peer debriefing, the idea of creating composites was generated, evaluated, and determined to be a solid way to handle the large amount of data. The data from a well-defined group of participants would be combined to create a representative composite character. In *Qualitative Data Analysis*, Miles and Huberman (1994) describe numerous ways to analyze and represent qualitative data. One example describes the use of composites. The procedure enables the researcher to “extract typical ‘stories,’ ‘plots,’ or ‘scenarios’ that a number of cases share” (p. 204). The composites that were formed for this study group the teachers based on the students they taught, which is how they were selected for the study. Those who taught students identified as GT were likely to have a more common experience than those who taught students who were referred but not identified. These teachers made up the first composite which included five teachers and was labeled Hortencia. The second composite, labeled Marisol, was formed by combining the data of the five teachers who taught the students the year they were referred for the GT program. It was very probable that the referrals were initiated by these teachers, so they would have viewed the students as potentially GT students. The perspective of the last group was different. They taught the students the year after they were tested and not identified as GT. Of all the groups, they were less likely to describe the students as gifted, and would be in the

position to indicate whether the identification process was accurate in their opinions or not. This composite included eight teachers and was labeled Angela.

Once the composites were established, the unitized data for each composite was analyzed separately using the constant comparative qualitative method as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985). The cards were individually read and then categorized. Each card was evaluated to determine if it fit a category already established, if a category could be revised to include the card, or if the card represented a new category. During this process, categories were changed and revised to be either more exclusive or inclusive as necessary to account for all of the cards. Then the categories were reviewed for overlap and relationships. In some cases, the categories were combined to form a broader category. The cards were read repeatedly to ensure a good fit of the categories. The data from the cards were then entered into a spreadsheet to further facilitate analysis. Categories continued to be refined as tables of the data were formed.

After each composite was analyzed, the data were combined. Similar categories emerged across the composites. When all the data were combined, clear themes emerged related to the characteristics of giftedness teachers observe in gifted bilingual students, the information used as the basis for referring bilingual students for the gifted program, their views as to the most significant barrier to bilingual students being identified as gifted, and meaningful suggestions for solving the problem of finding gifted students in the bilingual population.

TRUSTWORTHINESS

An essential element of any study is its trustworthiness. There are several ways Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe for a qualitative researcher to establish trustworthiness. Prolonged engagement is one important piece. This component deals with the researcher building trust with the participants and understanding the culture within which they are functioning. As an employee of the same school district as the participants, the researcher benefited from a foundation of trust and a shared culture of work. In addition, the researcher was in a support position having provided training and problem-solving ideas with difficult students. Having interacted with several of the participants numerous times prior to the study, a level of trust was established prior to the study. When interviewing teachers with whom the researcher had limited prior contact, the interviews began with a lot of general get-acquainted type conversation. The researcher was sure to provide positive feedback for the participants' willingness to meet and talk about their former students.

A second component to trustworthiness is triangulation. Triangulation involves verifying information between sources. During the study, a participant suggested that one way to improve the GT identification of bilingual students was to test them more often. Many students who are referred and tested for the GT program do not stop at one year of evaluation. Instead, their teachers and parents refer them for testing repeatedly. This rarely happens with bilingual students. The participant observed that bilingual students are rarely referred more than once, but that they might benefit from repeated

testing. This participant was interviewed early in the study, so there were multiple opportunities to triangulate this observation and suggestion with other participants.

Peer debriefing is an additional component Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe to establishing trustworthiness. At several professional conferences, the researcher had the opportunity to debrief with peers in both formal and informal settings. These occurred through the data analysis phase of the study. Emergent categories, significant pieces of interviews, and the idea of forming composite characters to facilitate analysis were also discussed with numerous and varied peers in the field of gifted education.

Negative case analysis was used throughout the data analysis in this study. The researcher's hypotheses changed and evolved throughout the review of the units and in light of the emergent categories and the resultant emergent themes. This is the heart of qualitative research; the evolution of the design and outcomes of the study are discovered through repeated analysis and revision to include all of the data collected.

SUMMARY

This study examined the problem of under-representation of linguistically diverse students in GT programs and a school district's attempt to address that problem from the perspective of teachers who taught students evaluated for the program. In order to develop a deep understanding of the problem and potential solutions, a qualitative case study method was employed. The procedures used to collect and evaluate the data were described above to facilitate understanding of the subsequent results. The

researcher was able to build a clear picture of the complex problem and potential solutions from the point of view of teachers of bilingual students.

CHAPTER IV

THICK DESCRIPTION

BACKGROUND

This study was conducted in a large suburban school district in southeastern Texas. The school district covers 170 square miles and includes 38 elementary schools, twelve middle schools, and ten high schools. In the 2003-2004 school year, 61,011 students attended school in the district. The demographics of the school district in 2003-2004 were 30% African American, 20% Hispanic, 32% White, 18% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 26% Economically Disadvantaged. The district has grown by 16% since the 1999-2000 year. All minority populations increased by two or three percent and the population of economically disadvantaged students increased by five percent. (Texas Education Agency, 2004)

In 2002-2003 the school district added the Bilingual Verbal Abilities Test (BVAT) to the battery of tests administered to students referred for the gifted and talented program. The BVAT, a translated test, provides an English Language Proficiency score and a bilingual verbal ability score. The bilingual score is a combination of the student's performance in both English and his or her native language. The BVAT was administered to referred students who received services through the English as a Second Language (ESL) or the bilingual program as a replacement for the English verbal abilities test given to all other referred students. The BVAT was already in use in the district's Special Education Department, so it was

thought that it might be useful in finding gifted students for whom English was not their first languages. Teachers who spoke multiple languages were recruited to administer the BVAT in Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese), French, Hindi, Portuguese, Spanish, and Vietnamese. The teachers were trained to administer the test and they were sent to various campuses across the district to test students. Teachers were not allowed to test their own students. Through the use of the BVAT, 23 students were identified as gifted and talented. Of these students, 19 were tested in Chinese and only four were tested in Spanish. Even though approximately half the students tested were native Spanish speakers, these students made up only 17% of those identified using the BVAT.

Despite these results, the district continued to use the BVAT in their testing battery for ESL or bilingual students referred for the GT program. One of the benefits of recruiting teachers to administer the test was their resultant interest in finding gifted students among the linguistically diverse populations at their schools. The same teachers volunteered the following year to administer the test and some of them began corresponding with the researcher about professional development in gifted education. The combination of the teachers' interests in the issue of under-identification of linguistically diverse students and the researcher's need to further investigate the problem prompted this qualitative study.

Seventeen teachers were interviewed in this study and one responded to questions through electronic mail. The teachers fell into three broad groups, those who taught students who were identified as gifted and talented, those who taught students the year they were referred for the program, and those who taught students the year after

they were evaluated but not identified for the program. To facilitate an understanding of each group's experiences and opinions, a composite character was created for each group by combining the interviews of the teachers in each group.

TEACHERS OF IDENTIFIED GT BILINGUAL STUDENTS—HORTENCIA

Hortencia represents the group of teachers who taught bilingual students identified as gifted and talented. There are five teachers in this group. Table 3 provides basic information about each of the participants. Table 4 breaks down the topics discussed by each participant and includes the number of comments each made regarding each topic.

The first teacher in this group is Ms. Ingle. She was interviewed in the researcher's office after school. Ms. Ingle is a teacher of the gifted who has been involved in the GT program in this school district since the program was established. She has attended years of GT training and has presented GT training. She has been teaching for 28 years and has taught both first and second grade. The year she was interviewed she was teaching second grade at Pheasant Elementary. She was also teaching second grade when she taught Savanna, who was identified as GT, and Elvira, who was not identified. Ms. Ingle was born and raised in America and is not bilingual. She is a very cheerful woman who seems to really enjoy teaching. She is very positive about her students and has a very active, creative classroom. She is rather small, Caucasian, with curly dark hair.

Table 3
Information on Participants in Composite Hortencia

Participant	Gender	Ethnicity	Years Experience	Bilingual or GT Program	Grade Level	Native Language	School
2	F	White	28	GT	2	English	Pheasant
3	M	Hispanic	unknown	Bilingual	2	Spanish	Pheasant
6	F	Black	4	GT	4	English	Cliff
10	M	Hispanic	3	Bilingual	3	Spanish	Cliff
15	F	Hispanic	10	Bilingual	1	English	Pheasant

Table 4

Number of Comments by Each Participant (P) in the Composite Hortencia

Bilingual Program	GT Characteristics	Referral
key to future academic success P3-3	advanced language skills P2-5 P3-4 P6-1 P10-10 P15-7	based on experience P6-1 P10-1 P15-1
purpose: transition to English P6-1 P15-1	learn quickly P2-1 P3-2 P6-4 P15-2	based on activities P6-1
purpose: build Spanish skills P10-2	you can just see it P2-3 P3-1 P10-1 P15-1	Identification Barriers test issues P2-2 P6-1 P10-1 P15-1
exit: before 3rd grade P2-4 P10-1 P15-1	ahead of peers P3-1 P6-2 P15-4	lack of peer group P2-4 P3-7
exit: 3rd grade or later P2-5 P3-2 P15-2	successful P2-2 P6-1 P10-1	lack of exposure P6-3 P15-1
exit: by student P2-1 P6-2	hardworking P3-4 P10-3	concern of parents P3-2 P6-1
exit: deep Spanish background P10-1	mature, adult-like P3--3 P10-1	language on tests P10-1 P15-1
Programming teach Spanish then English P3-2 P6-1 P15-2	emotional P10-3 P15-1	language issues P10-1
share with regular ed P2-1 P15-2	confident P10-1 P15-2	Improvement Ideas test frequently & prepare P3-2 P10-3 P15-1
ability group P2-1 P3-1	leaders P6-2 P10-4	weigh non-test measures P6-2 P10-1
carefully select teacher P2-3	parental influence P3-1 P15-1	train teachers P2-2
GT trained bilingual teachers P2-1	high grades P10-7	identify at early ages P3-1
higher level thinking skills P3-1	creative P6-3	
self-contained P6-1	detail oriented P15-2	
dual language P3-1	hyperactive P10-2	

Note: Participant Number - Number of Comments, P2-1 means Participant 2 made 1 comment

The second teacher in this group is Mr. Nozaro. He was teaching second grade at Pheasant Elementary when he was interviewed. The interview took place after school in his classroom. He taught Savanna and Elvira, like Ms. Ingle. Mr. Nozaro is originally from Venezuela. He is bilingual and teaches in the bilingual program at Pheasant Elementary. He is Hispanic with dark eyes and hair. He is very trim. He smiles a lot and often chuckled during the interview. He is very interested in providing services to GT bilingual students. He has two children he believes are GT. They are middle and high school age and are not students in this school district. He completed GT training in a previous district in Texas. He was very familiar with and supportive of their GT program, although he did not teach in that program.

The third member of the group of teachers who taught identified GT students is Ms. Zot. Ms. Zot is African-American and is not bilingual. She is a GT teacher, having done her required GT training. Ms. Zot is not very tall and has shoulder length hair. She is rather serious and knows her students very well. She has been teaching five years, all of them at Cliff Elementary. She was interviewed in her classroom after school. The year she was interviewed she taught fifth grade. However, she taught Emilio, an identified GT bilingual student the previous year in fourth grade. He was in her fourth grade GT class, having just exited the bilingual program. Ms. Zot was taking graduate classes and working on her Master's Degree through a grant program offered to teachers at her school.

Mr. Smith is the fourth member of this group. Mr. Smith was very verbal and excited about the interview. His was the only interview that took place during the

school day. He had arranged for someone to watch his class, including taking them to their specials classes (art, music, or PE). He is from Mexico and has been teaching bilingual third grade at Cliff Elementary for three years. He has not had GT training. Mr. Smith is rather tall with very fair skin and light brown hair. He joked that English should have been easy for him to learn since he had such an American last name. He mostly developed his English skills while at Cambridge in England at age fourteen. Before coming to the U.S. to teach, Mr. Smith worked in sales and marketing. He got into teaching through marketing and did some English tutorials in his home country. Like Ms. Zot, he taught Emilio. However, he taught Emilio the year he was identified as GT while Ms. Zot taught Emilio the year after. The same year he taught Emilio, Mr. Smith taught Castel, Chale and Gitana who were not identified as GT.

Ms. Hernandez is the fifth teacher in the group and was interviewed in her classroom after school. She is Hispanic with shoulder length dark hair cut in a bob. She is quite tall and thin, very lithe. Ms. Hernandez was born in America; her mother had immigrated to the United States at a young age. Her mother's experience learning English was very traumatic, so she insisted that her children grow up speaking English. It wasn't until age nine that Ms. Hernandez learned Spanish. She later took several years of Spanish in high school and was a foreign exchange student. She does not believe she is fully fluent in Spanish, but is certainly fluent enough to teach bilingual first grade. She has been teaching for eleven years, all but one in bilingual programs. For the last nine years she has taught at Pheasant Elementary. She taught Savanna and Elvira in first grade, the year they were referred for GT testing. Savanna was identified

during that year. Ms. Hernandez has not attended GT training, but was planning on attending the following summer.

These five teachers make up the first composite character which is named Hortencia. She is female since three of the five participants in this group were female. She has taught for eleven years. She currently teaches second grade. Based on the participants, she is Hispanic although English was her first language. Her primary experience has been within the bilingual program at Pheasant Elementary. Her interview took place after school in her classroom. She clearly remembered the students we discussed in the interview. In addition, she provided information regarding other high ability bilingual students she has taught in her classroom.

The interview began with a general question about teaching bilingual students, particularly those she believed were GT. Hortencia believes it is important to provide instruction in Spanish first. Then, once students have grasped the concept in their native language, she teaches the English vocabulary and reinforces the concept in English. She finds that bilingual classes have fewer students with extreme disabilities and tend to have fewer behavioral issues than general education classes.

There's so many more emotional and physical challenges with the regular kids than there are with bilingual kids. I had, of course, you don't want to identify a child as ADD or ADHD early on. There's age appropriate time. I had two ADHD; I had one sexually abused; I had one whose mother was in prison; I had two discipline problems, I mean just really, really discipline problem kids; I had, he's at another elementary school out there, in their facility there, not Tourettes,

he had Autism... I've been here nine, oh, eight years in bilingual, I've only had maybe two, one for sure ADD and the other one spoiled rotten. (Participant 15, page 3)

Hortencia mentioned a number of different ways gifted bilingual students could be served. First and foremost, the teacher should be carefully selected and trained in both bilingual and gifted education. "I think that needs to be more restrictive; I don't think just anybody ought to have them" (Participant 2, pg. 8). In her experience, some students have been well-served by spending part of the day in a regular or GT classroom and the other part of the day in a bilingual classroom. "Two that came out of our bilingual middle of the year, they went to bilingual class for writing and reading in Spanish, also did writing and reading...in English" (Participant 2, pg. 1). "I send them to my regular [education] colleague...that's how I got them to have that foundation in the ELA block that they needed" (Participant 15, pg. 12). In other cases, it worked well for students' needs to be met in a self-contained classroom. "That was a good thing with Emilio, being in a self-contained. We didn't transition a lot. We didn't have to move" (Participant 6, pg. 11). Ideally, gifted bilingual students would be grouped together and served in a dual language program, in Hortencia's opinion. "They need to pace with other children who are like-minded, or at least show signs of being like minded in various ways" (Participant 2, pg. 4). "The ideal setting would be a dual language setting. That's one I think on the long run" (Participant 3, pg. 9).

When it comes to gifted and talented students who are bilingual, she says they stand out, learn quickly, and have strong language skills. “If they’re gifted and they’re bilingual or ESL they do great, they just overcome that barrier” (Participant 2, page 1).

You can easily see when the kids are GT. When you're talking to them in Spanish, they already know all they can get fast and the first time you talk to them about anything, they'll understand it and then when you go into the English lesson, they're already ahead of the group. (Participant 3, page 2)

When they walk in, their demeanor, their presentation of information, their ability to understand oral commands, oral language, even the Spanish language, they have a good command of the print, of the expectations, the studying. I mean, they're just really confident kids. Their maturity level's different. I mean, it's just a notch above everybody else's. Where I would expect [the rest of the] kids to be probably by February, right after December, they're there from the get-go. (Participant 15, page 4)

Some had such advanced language abilities they translated for their parents. “They interpreted for the parent every single parent conference we had” (Participant 2, pg. 1). The bilingual students she’s known who were identified for the GT program have been very successful in the program and had a bright future. “Following those students the next five years until they went to middle school, they continued to be a good strong gifted student” (Participant 2, pg. 1). “Those girls, there’s really no limit; they could go anywhere they want to go, do anything they want to do and should be able to get the scholarships to do to it” (Participant 2, pg. 2).

After the general discussion, the interview moved into addressing the characteristics of specific students Hortencia taught who were referred for GT testing, two of whom, Emilio and Savanna, were subsequently identified as GT. Hortencia felt Emilio's identification was on target, as he was clearly gifted. "Emilio was a leader. He was a helper, he likes to help people. He was helping lot of people to improve their skill and he was very good student, hard working" (Participant 10, page 2). He was an "aggressive" learner who was "remarkable" in all subject areas and consistently had very high grades. He had strong abilities in both English and Spanish. Emilio enjoyed reading and doing projects. "He always went kind of above what was expected" (Participant 6, page 2). "He was much more advanced in semantic, his processes, mental processes, the way he structured ideas, in critical thinking and judgment and many things" (Participant 10, page 4). Other students began calling Emilio "The Uncle" as early as first grade because he was very serious and like an adult. "Socially, he was able to adapt to any situation that he was put into" (Participant 6, page 3). As Emilio transitioned into primarily using English, he had some problems with semantics or recalling words in English, but these issues quickly resolved. When asked if Emilio had areas of weakness, Hortencia could not think of any.

Savanna was also identified as gifted. While Hortencia did not want to question Savanna's identification, she believed that Savanna exhibited more characteristics of a high achiever than a gifted student.

I would never say Savanna shouldn't be -- her identification should come into question. I'm telling you, between you and me, I usually see that bend that's

different and I didn't see it. I just saw a little girl who picked up things pretty quickly, a student who didn't have to be repeated fifteen times, maybe twice but not always understood. She didn't quite get abstract that a gifted child would without knowing why. (Participant 2, page 7)

Hortencia believed that Savanna was ahead of many of the bilingual children in her class, but didn't exhibit a lot of the characteristics that she expects of a gifted student.

It came easy to her, learning is easy for her but compared to children who learning was difficult. It pushed her higher. She's a good student. She's not a great student. I don't mean necessarily just in performance. I mean in just ability to pick up things, hear it once, not have it repeated several times. (Participant 2, page 4)

Savanna was a strong reader in English and worked hard, despite the lack of English support at home.

Hortencia compared Savanna's characteristics with Elvira's. Elvira was clearly gifted in Hortencia's opinion, although she was not identified as GT in the identification process.

You said it once, said even half of it, she picked it up. She got the point. She went right on down the road. She wasn't anywhere near the level of intelligence that her older sister was, but it was all there in place and it just needed to bloom. Beats me why she doesn't test in there. It's one of those you see -- you see it and you don't get it, but you know in your heart, she should be. (Participant 2, page 4)

She's one of those that could and should do extremely well and just -- it's like didn't perform on that day. It's just a test on a given day. We're only looking at one particular day. It was like she never was quite on for that and yet she did in all of her performance in class. (Participant 2, page 5)

Discussing Elvira led Hortencia to describe Elvira's and Savanna's older sisters. She taught the sisters several years ago, and both of them were GT students. They exited the bilingual program in first grade as they were ready for English.

[Savanna's sister] came in and she could take over my classroom when it came to reading with intonation, beautiful intonation. ...I remember when [Elvira's sister] came in, I was looking at her file and she said about the third day, 'Ms. Hernandez when are we going to write and speak in English?' And I said, 'Well, we do.' She said, 'But not all the time.' And we're conversing like this in English. She said, 'I can write in English.' I said, 'Well, write me something you enjoy writing about or a special place you went to or special friend.' It was a beautiful paper; quite eloquent for a first grader. And it was at that point that I gave her a book, a reading level book, a leveled textbook, and I asked her to read it for me. So, then she did a beautiful job. (Participant 15, page 5)

Savanna is bright but she's not like her sister. Her sister dotted her i's and crossed her t's.... She was on fire from the day she walked in here, she was ready, she was confident, you know, she could do it and she, I mean, she was a

success over here. She didn't have a problem. There were no inhibitions [or] bashful side. She was ready to take over. (Participant 15, page 7)

Next the interview focused on other students who had been referred for GT testing, but who were not identified. Hortencia discussed three children in particular, Castel, Chale, and Gitana. "Castel was gifted as I see it, as I saw it, like, he will go places, intelligent, smart" (Participant 10, page 2). Castel participated in the school spelling bee in third grade and won, beating students in fourth and fifth grade. His comprehension was good and he was also very capable in math. Castel was also very socially adept; he was not as serious as Emilio and did not have grades as high as Emilio. "He was extremely intelligent in his appreciation of things. He was fast and very, very precise in his answers" (Participant 10, page 5). Gitana had higher grades than Castel, but not as high as Emilio. "She was really dedicated to work" (Participant 10, page 2) and she had very beautiful, precise handwriting.

Gitana was very emotional. I can remember that she was all of a sudden she was crying in the classroom. I'm saying, 'What happened?' Nothing happened. She was just emotional. She would cry for anything, but also the aesthetics appreciation -- the high degree of aesthetics appreciation shows that she was very intuitive. (Participant 10, page 7)

Chale did not perform as well as Castel or Gitana in the classroom. Hortencia suspected he might have had hyperactivity issues as he had trouble maintaining focus and being still. "On the other hand, his self-confidence was impressive. He said that he was very intelligent and we knew that he was" (Participant 10, page 2); however, his difficulty

managing himself led to poor performance. All three students tested at the advanced levels in bilingual testing, showing they were progressing well in their English development.

Over the years, Hortencia has taught other students she believed might be gifted. She described these students as very clever and testing at high levels in the bilingual program. “They are always very, very high achievers and they work hard so they want to learn and they are the ones who want to take other books home, if you supply them” (Participant 3, page 4). Hortencia described one student in particular,

She used to get desperate with the other kids and she’d say, ‘Can I go outside?’ ‘Why do you want to go outside?’ ‘Cause I can’t take this anymore. Can I go outside?’ ‘Grab a book and go outside.’ She was, ‘I don’t how they don’t get it.’ Sometimes they get higher concepts than other people and they just get it so easy that it gets boring. (Participant 3, page 8-9)

Another student was reading several grade levels ahead so he could read about astronomy. Often, these were students who had remarkable English ability with no English support at home.

Most of the students Hortencia described were not identified as gifted. She was asked her opinion on what the barriers might be. Hortencia felt she did not know enough about the tests used for the GT program. She mentioned it might help if she and her colleagues knew more about the tests used. However, she thought one barrier to identification might be language. “Maybe because of translations, you know. I found here some books that they are translated by people from Spain -- Spaniard people that’s

really different for people from Latin America. ...Sometimes the translations really, really changes the whole understanding of the question” (Participant 10, page 12-13). Students in Hortencia’s class have a range of Spanish backgrounds, which makes using a test in Spanish difficult.

You can't get too authentic, because some of our kids use that TexMex, but if you use the TexMex and the kids that are more authentic from down deep in Mexico, then they're not real sure what's going. So, I mean, it really has to be quite a marriage of right what we need here, that suits our needs here in Texas and not so much deep Mexico or Spain... So, you have all these Spanishes that could affect the way a child responds to a question or whether he understands it. I have a child here from Dominican Republic and his words, it's a delight, because I'll say, 'How do you call that? What do you call...' and he'll say something else different. (Participant 15, page 10)

Besides the complex language problem, Hortencia thought a lack of exposure to testing situations might be a barrier. “Truly, I think it’s the fact that they’re not being exposed to certain things, and I believe that sometimes because they are from low SES, they don’t have all the experiences others have” (Participant 6, page 5). In addition, parents of bilingual students sometimes need support in referring their children.

I had a Hispanic student in my class and he was in the GT class, he was a filler, and [his mother] wanted to get him tested and we spent, I remember, a long afternoon trying to fill out the [referral] form to fill out the examples and what

she should write because, you know, that also I think turns them off. (Participant 6, page 6)

In addition, Hortencia observed that the students may be poor test takers or had some outside factor interfere with testing. “Maybe she wasn’t in the mood, it wasn’t her day. I don’t know what happened. Maybe it was the first time...like on the spelling bee, she was nervous, she was crying” (Participant 10, pg. 7). “They’re really smart, but I think it might also just be they can’t take tests. I mean, it’s very difficult for them to take tests” (Participant 6, pg. 5).

Hortencia found that sometimes students had trouble bridging the bilingual and GT “worlds.” Some who were identified had difficulty as they grew older managing social issues, and other students did not want to be in the GT program because it might mean leaving their social group. This was particularly a problem in Hortencia’s former district where GT students went to separate GT academy schools.

I remember two times I have to talk the parents into it because those two times -- well, one of the times, the girl didn't even want to go to the testing because she said she was gonna lose her friends in that school -- they were gonna be sent to another school, and she has been with the same friends since pre-k. She didn't want to lose her friends. She said, ‘No, I don't want to do it. I’d rather stay with my friends.’ Also, the thing with the parents they realize that they won't be able to help the kids because they are afraid that the work the kids are going to get is gonna be over their own level. (Participant 3, page 4)

Hortencia struggled to find ideas to improve the identification of bilingual children for the GT program. At first she responded with questions about the tests. Then she related her experience in a previous district.

We had, I think it was in first grade that all the kids have right to be tested, we invited all the first grade to go to the district wide testing -- the bilingual testing and some parents wanted to take their kids and it was open. We sent them a letter, everybody was welcome and that way we got to identify enough kids to have three whole GT classes in the district wide. (Participant 3, page 3)

Hortencia was asked if perhaps the students should be encouraged to test more than once for the program. She seemed to support this idea. “We should keep them and possibly a month and check them because in my experience people develop intelligence all through life, according to their experience and we know about growth” (Participant 10, page 5). She also thought it might provide an opportunity for more exposure to standardized testing. In order to prevent later social problems, she recommended identifying students early, “then they develop the group among themselves, you know. They keep together with other gifted kids” (Participant 3, page 5). Finally, Hortencia suggested the identification rely less on standardized testing for bilingual students; “maybe on those kids make it weigh heavy on the teacher’s perception and maybe even the parent’s” (Participant 6, page 6).

Hortencia has attended GT training; however, her decisions of who to refer for the GT program are based on her experience. “[They’ve] got that special something I can just recognize, one of those things you can’t put your hand on it, hang your hat on

it, but you know when you're dealing with one" (Participant 2, page 4). It "could be just as a feeling, a guess. Okay, I have a guess, but sometimes when you see it on daily basis, you realize that it's not like just a feeling" (Participant 10, page 11).

I would look for someone who exceeds, someone who goes beyond the call of duty, who adds all the extras, you know. Maybe adds more emotion to it than just what it is. So, they just kind of go above the call of duty when it comes to their work and it's effortless. It's just who they are. It's part of their schema or you know. Sometimes, it takes very little to trigger that because it's already there. You're just tapping into it and it just kind of comes out, you know. (Participant 15, page 11)

I like to give assignments where the kids can be creative because I think it builds their thinking skills. I don't like to show them an example all the time. I want them to come up with what they think it looks like. And that's one way that I judge. I look to see and I see what was your example that you came up with... I also look to see if maybe you catch onto things a little bit quicker than everyone else. (Participant 6, page 2)

She also considers students' grades, their critical thinking and reading comprehension.

The final question of the interview focused on Hortencia's opinion of the philosophy and purpose of the bilingual program. Among teachers there seems to be a divide regarding the purpose of the program and when students should exit the program. Hortencia believes the bilingual program is a very important program that is designed to

help students transition to English by building a strong foundation in their native language.

If they don't have the basic in Spanish, how could they ever get English? So, they are doomed to drop out of school in eighth grade, eighth grade is when the big Spanish drop out rate is 'cause they didn't go to the bilingual. On the other hand, the kids that go to a bilingual program and they transition, they do better... 'cause the more they learn in their own language at an early age, the stronger gonna be their foundations that allows them to improve their academic achievement in English, when they leave the program. (Participant 3, page 9-10)

Regarding when students should exit the program, Hortencia believes it should be decided on a student-by-student basis. She recognizes that some students should exit early (before third grade) but most will not be ready until third grade or later. "I think they should leave as quickly as possible, but as far as they have developed deep, a deep background on their native language, of course" (Participant 10, page 10). "Not all the kids are the same. We have them since pre-k here in this school. I think some of my kids will be ready after third grade" (Participant 3, page 10). "I think, you know, they shouldn't be -- I think [when to transition] should be almost student-by-student, you know -- judge it by student" (Participant 6, page 8). She was concerned that bilingual teachers tend to want to keep GT bilingual children in the program rather than let them exit early if they are ready and that the district administrators agree. "Older grade teachers didn't like the fact that they've been moved from the program 'cause they wanted that strength" (Participant 2, pg. 4). "That's where the Bilingual Coordinator

and I differed...I also heard they will help the bilingual scores in third grade if we keep them in there” (Participant 15, pg. 15).

Hortencia believes that gifted kids stand out early in a classroom. Their skill levels are higher than the other students’, particularly their ability and readiness for English. She supports their exiting the bilingual program early if they’ve developed a strong foundation in Spanish. The students she has taught who she believed were GT learned very rapidly, seeming to know things before she finished introducing them. Hortencia tends to rely on her intuition and experience rather than training when determining who might be GT. She believes that language and lack of experience are the primary reasons bilingual students are not identified for the GT program and she supports testing bilingual students more often as a solution. She views the bilingual program as a transition program designed to prepare students for success in English.

TEACHERS OF BILINGUAL STUDENTS THE YEAR THEY WERE REFERRED—MARISOL

The second group of teachers taught bilingual students the year they were referred for the gifted and talented program, though none of the students were identified as GT. Five participants are in this group. Table 5 provides basic information about each participant included in this composite. Table 6 provides the topics the participants discussed along with the number of comments each made about each topic.

Table 5

Information on Participants in Composite Marisol

Participant	Gender	Ethnicity	Years Experience	Bilingual or GT Program	Grade Level	Native Language	School
4	M	H	19	bilingual	K	Spanish	Cliff
8	F	H	14	bilingual	4	Spanish	Pheasant
11	F	H	20	bilingual	3	Spanish	Cliff
12	F	H	8	bilingual	2	Spanish	Cliff
14	F	H	4	bilingual	K	Spanish	Cliff

Table 6

Number of Comments by Each Participant (P) in Composite Marisol

Bilingual Program		
keep Spanish		
P11-2	P14-1	
purpose: transition to English		
P4-1	P12-1	P14-1
purpose: build Spanish skills		
P8-2	P11-2	
purpose: avenue to learn		
P4-2		
exit: 3rd grade or later		
P8-2	P12-1	
exit: by student		
P4-4	P11-1	
exit: deep Spanish background		
P11-1		

Programming		
teach Spanish then English		
P4-1	P11-1	P12-1
start early		
P11-1		
ability group		
P11-1		
carefully select teacher		
P11-1		
loop with students		
P11-1		
use variety of strategies		
P11-1		

GT Characteristics (cont.)		
advanced math skills		
P12-1		
successful		
P8-1		
behavior problems		
P14-1		

GT Characteristics		
advanced language skills		
P4-3	P8-7	P11-9
P12-3	P14-3	
learn quickly		
P4-3	P8-1	P12-2
very sharp		
P4-1	P8-4	P12-1
ahead of peers		
P4-1	P11-1	P12-4
ask questions		
P4-1	P8-3	P12-1
creative		
P4-1	P8-3	P11-1
you can just see it		
P8-1	P12-2	P14-2
wide range of knowledge		
P12-3	P14-1	
mature, adult-like		
P11-1	P14-2	
get info on their own		
P4-2	P8-1	
high grades		
P8-1	P11-1	
competitive		
P8-1	P11-1	
need pushing		
P11-2		
parental influence		
P8-2		
problem solvers		
P4-2		
perfectionistic		
P4-2		
leaders		
P11-2		
make connections		
P12-1		
good memory		
P4-1		

Referral		
based on experience		
P4-1	P8-1	P12-1
P14-1		
based on training		
P8-1	P11-1	
based on activities		
P4-1		
difficult at lower grades		
P4-1	P11-1	

Identification Barriers		
language of tests		
P11-4	P12-2	P14-1
language issues		
P8-1	P11-1	P14-1
concern of parents		
P8-3	P11-2	
lack of knowledge of ID		
P4-2	P8-3	
lack of exposure		
P12-1		
test bias		
P12-1		

Improvement Ideas		
test frequently & prepare		
P4-4	P8-1	P11-3
P12-1		
train teachers		
P4-1	P11-2	
expose teachers to tests		
P8-3		

Note: Participant Number - Number of Comments, P2-1 means Participant 2 made 1 comment

Mr. Ignacio, the first teacher in this group, was interviewed after school in the researcher's office. He has been teaching for nineteen years. At the time of the interview he was teaching bilingual kindergarten at Cliff Elementary. He holds a Master's Degree in Educational Administration and has taught at all levels and served in the capacity of instructional technology specialist for a campus. He professes Kindergarten to be his favorite, however. Mr. Ignacio does not look like a Kindergarten teacher. He is a tall, ruggedly handsome man, with dark hair and dark eyes in his mid to late forties. He attended GT training in another district but only taught GT students during his student teaching. Mr. Ignacio is originally from Spain although he graduated from a university in the U.S. and learned English while working abroad during summers as a teenager. He referred seven students for the GT program two years before he was interviewed. None of them were identified as GT.

The second teacher interviewed in this group is Ms. Pena. She was interviewed in her fourth grade classroom at Pheasant Elementary where she has taught for fourteen years, half in bilingual fourth grade, the other half in bilingual second grade. She is a small dark Hispanic woman with elementary school-age grandchildren. She was born in America and learned to speak both English and Spanish as a child. Once her grandmother passed away, when she was nine, she no longer spoke Spanish at home. It wasn't until she met her husband that she began to use Spanish again. She graduated from high school in this district and all of her children grew up in this district. Ms. Pena taught Lujana the year she was referred for GT testing, but Lujana was not

identified. However, Ms. Pena taught several other students in previous years she is sure were GT.

Ms. Interado was interviewed at Cliff Elementary in her bilingual first grade classroom. She is also a member of this group, as she taught Isabel the year she was referred. Ms. Interado is very interested in the GT program and has administered the Bilingual Verbal Abilities Test as part of the GT testing process for bilingual students referred for GT testing. She was not permitted to test her own students. She has attended GT training and is interested in pursuing a Master's Degree in reading. Ms. Interado is a thin, athletic-looking Hispanic woman with short auburn hair. She is full of energy and speaks very rapidly with a lot of passion. She is from Mexico and has been teaching for twenty years, all but five of those in Mexico at a private bilingual school. Four of the five years she has taught in the U.S., all at Cliff Elementary, she taught bilingual third grade. She changed to first grade the year she was interviewed. Ms. Interado learned English as a child when she attended an American school. She feels very strongly that being bilingual has provided her with wonderful opportunities and will be a great asset to her students.

The fourth teacher in this group is Ms. Loring. Ms. Loring teaches bilingual second grade at Cliff Elementary and was interviewed in her classroom after school. She referred Sierra for GT testing and could describe her very clearly. The year she was interviewed was her eighth year teaching, all second grade, all at Cliff Elementary. Prior to coming to the United States, Ms. Loring taught Economics at a university in Mexico which is where she learned English.

Ms. Zapada is the final teacher in this group. She has taught in the bilingual program at Cliff Elementary for four years, one in fifth, one in third grade, and two in kindergarten. Five of her kindergarten students were referred for GT testing, although none were identified. Prior to coming to the U.S. she completed a graduate degree from a university in Spain that provided her the opportunity to travel around the world and attend classes at various universities. Through this travel, she developed her English skills.

These five teachers make up the composite named Marisol. Based upon the situation of each teacher, this composite teaches first grade at Cliff Elementary and was interviewed in her classroom. She has thirteen years of teaching experience at various grade levels, most of which were at this school in the bilingual program. Her only experience teaching a GT class was a brief period during teacher training. Marisol grew up in Spain, where Spanish was her primary language. However, she began learning English in school around age 10 and had the opportunity to continue to develop her English during summer travels to various countries in Europe. Marisol easily recalled the students who were referred, although many she does not consider to be gifted. Some were referred by their parents and some she referred because they were strong students and she thought it important to refer many students. Her thinking has changed, and now she only refers those students she believes have the best chance of being identified as GT. She has taught students she believes are gifted, even though they have not been labeled as such.

The interview began with a general overview of the purpose of the study and gathering information about Marisol's teaching background. Marisol prefers teaching bilingual students because their parents are very supportive. These parents want their children to be educated and they want to help their children. "I think the parents are the most interested in the kids. You see when open houses come, almost all my parents are here" (Participant 11, pg. 17). "I very seldom have any absentee" (Participant 4, pg. 12). Over the past several years she has noticed an increase in the number of bilingual classrooms at her school. Marisol then began to describe the characteristics of gifted bilingual students.

They don't just do their academic work. I could tell whenever we're doing projects the way they ask questions, the way they answer questions, the level of curiosity. ... Their project has the steps like, you know, first then next, final, but with the steps always there is some critical thinking, some problems that they have to overcome. And so with those projects, when those kids get to those questions where they have to think not just what the next step, but 'Why am I doing this?' or 'How can I get this?' is when I notice who are the kids who really, you know, can digest that. (Participant 4, pg. 2)

"They read on their own. They ask a lot of questions" (Participant 8, pg. 4). They can apply what they've learned in other situations and make connections. "You explain them and they get the idea and you tell them another thing and suddenly, they're doing things in a different way" (Participant 11, pg. 5). "The children themselves are self-motivated and they have that desire to achieve" (Participant 8, pg. 7). "They're capable

really to get information on their own and then be able to develop it and I think that's a real truly GT kids" (Participant 4, pg. 8). They are able to multi-task and may be able to eventually switch between languages fluently. She described the creativity that gifted kids use that differentiates them from regular students who simply learn the structures you teach them. In most students, "there is no freedom of, you know of expression; of 'It's okay, I'm going to break the rule and do something different and I can still accomplish the task.' And so that's what I really look for sometimes for a kid to be different from the other group" (Participant 4, pg. 8). "When they answer you a question, they don't answer like everybody. They try to find something else and then when you ask something, they get you to a different thing" (Participant 11, pg. 15). "Those kids could move fast, seriously, you know" (Participant 4, pg. 7). "They need to be challenged. They do. And if they get that challenge because they know that they're gonna be moving faster and faster and faster than somebody else. They'll be very successful" (Participant 4, pg. 10).

She believes that programming for gifted bilingual students begins with careful selection of the teacher.

You really have to have those teachers who are willing to go that extra step because you have a real responsibility there, because those kids are really good... You really have to be working but in a different pace and in a different level and everything; so that really takes hard work. (Participant 11, page. 25)

"Maybe a teacher could go with them the next year so she could help them more because she really knows those kids and she will know their strengths and weaknesses,

everything” (Participant 11, pg. 14). She felt that this “looping” with the students would allow a teacher to continue the pacing and high level of teaching because she would already know the students.

The interview moved on to specific students Marisol has taught, like Sierra.

I remember that Sierra S. was very bright. She was in my classroom two years ago and she was reading all the levels above my students when had them and she knows many things about many subjects and she will also answer any question and she was already teaching many of things I was taught to them, she already knew it and she was, I could see that she was different from the other ones, but she didn't want to really notice too much. She was quiet. (Participant 12, pg. 1)

While Sierra was able to understand and speak English, she was hesitant to do so.

Marisol felt she did not want to stand out from the rest of the class. She also found Sierra needed encouragement to work hard and not be satisfied with an average performance. Marisol taught kindergarten for a couple of years and described a student she thought was brilliant. “He could read already. The way he talks, like using words. I don't know the vocabulary of kindergarten is like five words and he had a wide vocabulary....I don't know like a little grown up” (Participant 14, pg. 4).

Marisol referred a student last year that she felt sure was GT. “When he came to read or solve math problems or solve any kind of problem that requires thinking, he was just very, very, very accurate, his level of thinking was way above a regular student who just do the academics” (Participant 4, pg. 2). He was reading two grade levels ahead in

both English and Spanish with no English support at home and had a great memory. While this student was not identified, she believes he might be identified “two years down the road,” particularly if he continues to perform at high levels and continues to be challenged (Participant 4, pg. 5). Yet another student she referred was so advanced Marisol arranged for her to attend some third grade classes.

She was bright, so bright. This year she finished everything first and I had to send her up to third grade and she was doing the same work that everybody in third grade. She was very, very intelligent. ... She could do multiplication, division, and everything in English and in Spanish, but she's no longer here. (Participant 12, pg. 3)

The student moved before the GT testing was completed. Marisol also described a student from her student teaching.

There was a student, he missed a question on a test. He felt like that was the end of the world, seriously, and then I couldn't believe it. I said, ‘Gee, it was just a simple mistake,’ but he was so upset because everyone got it and he didn’t. And so, I said, ‘Well, they have the good and the bad.’ (Participant 4, pg. 7)

Other students Marisol described made straight A’s, although she noted “I know that’s not particularly one of the characteristics” (Participant 8, pg. 2). Another student got very excited when she talked about his having the opportunity to go to college, that scholarships will help pay for it. He “was very smart, kind of weird little boy” (Participant 8, pg. 12-13). Yet another student Marisol referred “is very outspoken. She will actually debate things and argue with you. She’s just very talkative. And sometimes

I can tell that she's bored, you know, and we'll read something and because she's already ahead, she'll say, 'We already read that Ms. Pena, we need to move on'" (Participant 8, pg. 4). Marisol believes that sometimes you can just see that the student is different. "Since the first day I could see that she was different. I don't know, sometimes in the way they look" (Participant 12, pg. 8). She described many of these students as "very sharp."

Marisol believes referring students is more difficult at the lower grades. In the past Marisol referred many students, but now she is waiting until the end of the year. This allows her to follow the students' progress for the whole year "so I can have a better picture like a more generic picture of the student" (Participant 4, pg. 1).

I noted that that works a little bit better, it gives me a better picture of the student and all the characteristics from the academics and how the kids, you know, move or progress and in that way, I'm a little bit more, we'll say accurate about who I wanted to refer because I have a little bit more background on the student. (Participant 4, pg. 2)

When considering which students to refer, she considers their behavior and "how they manage things." "I know that some kids that are gifted have behavior problems" (Participant 14, pg. 3). "I look at a lot of things. Also, they are like the kids that are always wanna be the manager or the ones that are trying to make other kids do things; they're trying to be the leaders" (Participant 11, pg. 16).

When asked what barriers there may be to identifying bilingual students that are gifted, Marisol was unsure. She noted that sometime the parents need convincing that

GT testing is a good opportunity for their children; “the parents are anxious to even sign the papers. They say, no, because if they don't get it, it's like they're gonna be punished or something” (Participant 11, pg. 18). She felt unqualified to identify problems with the identification process. “I'm not familiar with the tests that are given. I've never given them” (Participant 8, pg. 3). She thought that if she helped administer the tests, she might have more specific ideas about problems. Marisol thought there must be an issue with language, even though some of the testing is nonverbal. The bilingual students she teaches have not had a rich language environment, and this may affect their performance on tests.

I think [the tests] are very difficult for them and for everybody because there are not words that are common for many people and they don't have anybody to expose them to that kind of words and the parents they don't know. I don't how they measure the intelligence. First I'm thinking that it's not their ability to learn but everything about the language, and sometimes these are conditioned by the environment. (Participant 12, pg. 7)

While the tests might be more appropriate for students living in Latin American countries where Spanish books are readily available, they are not appropriate in the community where Marisol teaches. In her school's community, Spanish books are in limited supply.

Though she has not seen the tests used for GT identification, Marisol has seen other tests which are translated from English to Spanish and does not feel they are equivalent. She explained this in detail.

In the English language the words aren't so hard, but in Spanish they are... They are not high frequency words. They're really words that you use them in special cases and you really have to be good at it to know what they mean because if you read 'em like that, even though you try to get the clue from the sentence or whatever, you don't get any clues. (Participant 11, pg. 7)

The languages are a reflection of the thinking system, something like that and it's not the same correlation in the English system and the Spanish system. So, what makes sense in English doesn't make it in Spanish ... For example, it's kind of like the spelling. The spelling is very hard in English. That's why there are spelling bee's in English and everything and as Spanish speakers, we don't understand why because it's so easy to spell a word, any word, even in English it's easy because our language is so different that allows us to spell correctly. (Participant 14, pg. 6-7)

To clarify her point, Marisol went on to give another example.

In the North Pole, they have like three different words for the snow. Why, because they have three different concepts of snow. If you have another person in the world, somewhere else, if you ask, they just have one word, just one concept of snow. It happens like that. In the system of the language, it's attached to some concept. So, you cannot use one language to refer to a concept that it has been growing up with another language.... And you take a kid from the North Pole, and you show him a picture of a bus, he would say, 'I don't know.' So, then are you going to declare him that he's dumb? No, he has another

culture and religion and everything. So, something like that. So, then, in Spanish language you have several different words for a bus. So, then are you going to consider Spanish kids gifted because he says a lot of different words? No, it's because they have those words, something like that. So, you cannot use the same system to see if that kid is gifted in basic Spanish than the same system that you use for English speaker. (Participant 14, pg. 7-8)

Instead, she believes tests should be developed in Spanish for Spanish speakers rather than simply translating English tests.

Marisol was asked for suggestions to improve the identification of gifted bilingual students. She suggested that it might be beneficial to prepare students for GT testing like students prepare for the SAT. "I'm taking my SAT when I'm in the 10th grade or practicing it and practice make you better and when you get to the 11th grade, and you really have to take it, you do it and then you get a really high score" (Participant 4, pg. 5). She wants to be sure her students are prepared to do the thinking required and have some exposure to the testing. In some districts, students take standardized testing at several grade levels, which provides them exposure to the test and the testing situation. Marisol suggested that doing the same thing for GT testing might help bilingual students perform better during the identification process. She also suggested repeated testing, "the best thing is to keep testing them until they, if they have the potential there, is to insist on 'Okay maybe we missed the mark this year, but try again next year'" (Participant 4, pg. 10). "I think that is the key thing, to continue with

the observation; continue with the testing; continue with everything” (Participant 11, pg. 17). Marisol also suggested grouping high ability bilingual students together.

We really don't have that opportunity for those kids to be in a classroom where all the kids are the same so they can be exposed with other kids. They see that other kids are like them because the thing that happens here is that they're the best students that you have and because of that they see the other ones and they say, 'Well, why are they doing things so easy and mine is so hard? I would rather do that.' They don't see at that time that it's better for them to be exposed to harder things because it's gonna be in their best interest. But in the meanwhile, they say, 'No, I don't want no work. Why do you tell me that I have to get 100, if they're getting 70s and you're clapping at them?' (Participant 11, pg. 5)

Marisol has completed the initial 30 hours of training required of teachers of the gifted in the State of Texas. When asked if the training or experience has helped her more in recognizing which students to refer for GT testing, she had a mixed response. “The training [helps you] because they tell you a lot of things that maybe something you feel it, but you only feel it, you don't have the knowledge and when you have that feeling and that knowledge that is the best” (Participant 11, pg. 19). But she also thinks her experience has made a significant impact. She believes she is doing a better job of referring students now than when she first started teaching, even though the students are not being identified. “I don't think you need special certification to see that somebody's special. You just see it. Anyone can see it” (Participant 14, pg. 4).

At the end of the interview, Marisol was asked her opinion regarding the purpose of the bilingual program.

The purpose is to help the students to learn the academics and to incorporate to the English mainstream communication in that process so that they can't lose too many years in the adaptation. To make them, it's not really bilingual but to convert them to the mainstream education. (Participant 12, pg. 5)

"It comes to some point that you want to learn but you don't know the language. So, as a result of that, you're gonna have to find a bridge, a way how to get to that point"

(Participants 4, pg. 10). Instruction in the primary language provides students with opportunities to develop confidence in their abilities to learn as they build a strong foundation in their primary language. "We don't get the results that we're suppose to get because they don't give enough emphasis to the Spanish as it's supposed to be learned because here you have a lot of things that you're getting the Spanish and the English all combined" (Participant 11, pg. 2). She emphasized the need to begin skill building in the primary language in Pre-Kindergarten. While she states that students should transition when they are ready, she believes a gradual transition works for most students; "the stronger the foundation is in their native language, the better they're going to be in the English" (Participant 8, pg. 9). Most students are ready transition at third or fourth grade.

If they give up the Spanish very early, they have the risk of losing that Spanish forever... I think the longer you can attach to your mother language, the better because, I mean academically, it's better if you start learning English the

sooner the better because if you go to college or in high school everything's in English, it's easier for you. But personally, for personal world and everything, I think it's better not to give Spanish so early. (Participant 14, pg. 5)

I think if their English has gone real excellent and they know everything, they should exit, but what I tell them also when you get out of elementary, when you go to middle school, you have Spanish classes so get in the Spanish, even though you have a lot of Spanish background, don't leave it behind because it's like playing the piano. If you don't practice, you're gonna lose it.... Everything is in English, but continue practicing the Spanish because that is an extra every time in your life. That's why I'm here. If I didn't know Spanish, a lot of you know English but what do you need, a person that speaks both languages. That is the extra, that's one thing they are bringing us here and they are giving us this opportunity to be working here because of that knowledge in the Spanish language. That is a plus, even though you are here in the United States, there are a lot of people that need both languages and a lot of professions and in a lot of places, in hospital, lawyers, everybody has people that speak both English and Spanish so they can be translating and doing all those things. So, I tell my kids, you should be very proud that you know Spanish. (Participant 11, pg. 4)

Marisol continues to watch for gifted bilingual students even though few have been identified. She describes them as early readers who ask a lot of questions, make connections, find different answers and ways to solve problems that set them apart from other students, and exhibit a level of cognitive maturity. She has taught several students

she believes were gifted based on their high levels of performance and unusual characteristics. Her training and experience contribute to her knowledge of GT characteristics. She sees the bilingual program as a transition program that facilitates students' learning by teaching them first in their primary language. She also believes that retaining their Spanish abilities is important as a life skill.

TEACHERS OF STUDENTS THE YEAR AFTER THEY WERE REFERRED—

ANGELA

Angela is the name of the third composite character which is based on interviews with seven participants and an email correspondence with one participant. These eight teachers taught bilingual students who had been referred and tested for the GT program the year before these teachers taught them. None of the students were identified. Table 7 contains basic information on the participants and Table 8 contains a summary of their input.

Table 7

Information on Participants in Composite Angela

Participant	Gender	Ethnicity	Years Experience	Bilingual or GT Program	Grade Level	Native Language	School
1	F	C	10	bilingual	4	English	Cliff
5	F	H	7	bilingual	1	Spanish	Cliff
7	F	C	11	GT	5	English	Pheasant
9	M	H	2	bilingual	4	Spanish	Cliff
13	F	H	2	bilingual	1	Spanish	Cliff
16	M	H	8	bilingual	1	Spanish	Cliff
17	M	H	4	bilingual	4	Spanish	Cliff
18	F	H	6	bilingual	1	Spanish	Cliff

Table 8

Number of Comments by Each Participant (P) in Composite Angela

Bilingual Program		
keep Spanish		
P1-2	P9-1	P16-1
purpose: transition to English		
P1-2	P16-1	
purpose: build Spanish skills		
P5-1		
exit: by student		
P5-1	P16-1	
Programming		
teach Spanish then English		
P9-1	P13-1	P17-1

Note: Participant Number - Number of Comments, P2-1 means Participant 2 made 1 comment

The first teacher upon which the composite Angela is based is Ms. Safstrom. Ms. Safstrom participated in the first interview of this study, which took place at a table in the back of her fifth grade bilingual classroom after school at Cliff Elementary. She has been teaching for ten years. The previous year she taught fourth grade, and taught Chale, Isabel, and Castel. This was the year after they had been referred for the GT program and not identified. Ms. Safstrom was very talkative and jovial. She is very passionate about teaching and about how important it is for her students to learn English. She was very animated when talking about students she believed were gifted. She laughed often during the interview. She is a Caucasian woman who was born in America but learned Spanish while living in Ecuador. She also speaks German, making her trilingual. She has a college-age daughter who is both GT and learning disabled. Ms. Safstrom has a strong knowledge of the Bilingual Verbal Abilities Test, as a close friend was also friends with one of the authors of the test and they discussed the test during its creation.

Ms. Trevino was also born in America but shortly thereafter moved to Mexico. She did not return to the U.S. until she was eight. Spanish was her first language. She remembers being in an ESL pull-out program, rather than a bilingual program. Eventually she was just thrown into a full English program. Her interview took place in her Reading Recovery room at Cliff Elementary. She has been teaching for seven years, all but one in bilingual first grade. She taught Colon, Juanita, and Elena the year after they were tested. She has attended GT training and is prepared to be the GT bilingual teacher for first grade if they identify any students who need both services. Ms. Trevino

also was trained and administered the BVAT to bilingual students referred for the GT program at her school and a school nearby; she did not test her own students. Ms.

Trevino is Hispanic, not very tall, with long dark hair, and is very friendly and outgoing. She was earnest and thoughtful during the interview, but also laughed easily.

The third teacher in this group was Ms. Orland, a fifth grade GT teacher at Pheasant Elementary. She taught Lujana the year after she was referred for the GT program and the year she exited from the bilingual program without being identified for GT services. Ms. Orland has taught for eleven years, nine of them in gifted education. Her interview took place in her classroom after school. Ms. Orland is Caucasian and is not bilingual. She cares deeply for her students and has watched the demographics of her school gradually change. She marvels at the capacity her underprivileged students have for learning and survival. Ms. Orland is taller than average and has short dark hair. She is very thoughtful and genuine. She was able to recall a number of students she taught that she believed to be GT and who had recently exited the bilingual program.

Mr. Xapato was a fifth grade bilingual teacher at Cliff Elementary where he was interviewed. He has been teaching in the U.S. at Cliff for two years. Prior to coming to America he taught middle school students in various capacities in Mexico. Prior to that, he was a veterinarian. He draws on this background as the science teacher for his fourth grade team. As part of his master's degree in Mexico, he was required to learn English. Mr. Xapato taught Chale, Isabel, and Castel the year before he was interviewed, when the students were in fourth grade. He clearly remembered the three students who had been tested for GT. Mr. Xapato is of middle height, trim build, with curly hair. He was

quiet, thoughtful, and reserved during the interview. Towards the end of the interview he stated that he was nervous and was concerned that he had not prepared by reviewing the students' files. He was reassured that he was not expected to prepare, simply to describe students he had taught the last two years that he thought might be gifted.

The fifth teacher in this group is Ms. Uvalde who is from Columbia. She was interviewed after school in her classroom at Cliff Elementary during her second year of teaching. She taught four bilingual first graders the year after they were referred for the GT program. Because she was very new to teaching and was not trained in gifted education, she was concerned that she could not contribute to the study. She was surprised by the general low skill level of her students as compared to her own nieces and nephews in Columbia. Her degree is in accounting and she worked for almost 20 years as an auditor in Columbia. After a traumatic family event, she came to the United States where she took classes to learn English and continued to work as an accountant. She then decided to make a drastic change and pursue teaching. Ms. Uvalde is a tiny, very attractive woman with long straight dark hair. She was very humble and concerned about her ability to contribute to the study. She was very invested in teaching and wanting to help her students gain skills. She was able to clearly describe the characteristics of her high ability students, even though she felt unqualified to say whether they might be gifted or not.

Mr. Gomez also taught bilingual first grade at Cliff Elementary. He is from Mexico and has been teaching for eight years. He is a teaching partner with Ms. Trevino. Before coming to the U.S. to teach elementary school, he taught Physics at a

university in Mexico. He went from teaching college physics to teaching first grade. He has taught first grade for six years, and one year each in second and third grade.

Although he learned some English when he was in school, he struggled to learn English when he came to the United States. He spent a lot of time listening to the radio and watching television to increase his exposure to the language. He has a son who was identified as GT while he was in the bilingual program. His son's strengths tend to lie more in mathematics and science than in language arts and social studies. Mr. Gomez is of average height, with wavy dark hair and dark eyes. He was very candid in his interview, although a bit reluctant at first. He has not had GT training.

Mr. Ortiz was the last participant interviewed. His interview took place in his bilingual fifth grade classroom at Cliff Elementary. With Ms. Safstrom and Mr. Xapato, he taught Chale, Isabel and Castel the year they were in fourth grade. He taught them mathematics. He has been teaching for four years, all in fourth grade until the year he was interviewed. Mr. Ortiz was a slight, fair-skinned, fair-haired man from Mexico where he was a physician. He worked in the department of the Secretary of Health where he was responsible for providing training for fellow physicians. While the level is quite different, he feels he has been teaching in some capacity for many years. Though he has not had GT training, Mr. Ortiz could clearly articulate the characteristics he believed indicated giftedness. He was a strong advocate for one student in particular, in whom he saw great potential and ability.

The final member of this group is Ms. Horacio. She was not interested in participating in an interview but responded to several questions via electronic mail. She

taught bilingual first grade at Cliff Elementary and was in her sixth year of teaching. She taught four students the year after they were referred. She is from Spain.

By combining the information from the eight teachers above, the composite of Angela was created. Angela's interview began with a general discussion of her teaching background. She is from Mexico and is a native Spanish speaker. She had some opportunity to learn English in Mexico, but has learned the most since she has been in America. She is still a bit uncomfortable with her fluency. She has taught for six years, primarily in first and fourth grade bilingual classrooms. She sees a division within the bilingual teaching community between those who believe students should transition into English quickly and those who want students to develop balanced bilingualism.

We bilingual teachers don't agree with each other. That's a problem. We are not together in that because we are so different. You know, there are people who are, they are Hispanic people but they were born here. Spanish is their second language. English is their first language and they think in a different way than we, the ones from Mexico or from Spain, and we are really a lot of different people with different way of thinking, but I think we all have to think the kids got to learn English. They have to go to the regular classroom because the bilingual program is only to fifth grade. It's ideal that they become balanced bilingual. (Participant 16, pg. 3)

She acknowledges that the program is set up to be a transitional program and not a balanced bilingual program because bilingual services end at fifth grade. She has also

observed that many of her colleagues have not chosen for their own children to participate in the bilingual program, opting for English only instead.

One teacher, I remember him, he tells me that he was thinking that if he put his children, he has two boys, in the bilingual program, they are going to be at a disadvantage with the other children when they go to middle school or high school. And some other teachers say that what class of Spanish and what kind of Spanish and English my children are going to learn in a bilingual classroom because bilingual teachers are so different. Some speak with Argentina, some from Spain. There are a lot of bilingual teachers that don't speak very good Spanish. (Participant 16, pg. 6)

These parents intend to teach their children Spanish at home.

With the program as it is, Angela believes maintaining a strong foundation in Spanish is important while transitioning as soon as a student is ready.

I think it's a good idea for them to get good Spanish at the same time they are getting good English because I think people who know how to speak two or more languages would also have more opportunities, job opportunities and even social opportunities, relationships, you know, friends, friendships. So, I would say that it's good for them to get good Spanish but also to get into the mainstream as soon as possible but without forgetting about the Spanish, getting a good Spanish also. (Participant 9, pg. 5)

In her classroom, she teaches in Spanish first, then in English. She wants to be sure the students understand the concepts at a deep level, then learn the English vocabulary.

You help them first in their native language. You help them develop it, you know, orally, written, fluently, vocabulary, grammar, everything, and then once they have that down, and it's easier for them to transfer it to the English. And so, to me it's important for them to dominate the first language first and then be able to go to the second language. (Participant 5, pg. 1)

Angela also made sure to emphasize that learning English is important to the survival of her students and their families in America.

Angela has not had any GT training and expressed a lack of confidence in her knowledge about gifted students when asked her opinions about potential GT students she has taught. With reassurance, however, she did share her thoughts. In her opinion, a number of the students she taught who were previously tested are not gifted. Some were high achievers who worked hard, and some stood out in otherwise low ability classes. “I believe that they are really smart kids but not gifted” (Participant 18, pg. 1). When asked to describe bilingual students who she thought might be gifted, she provided specific characteristics. “When they see something new, they get excited and they grasp the concept and they immediately try to apply it and that helps them to learn more faster and they will do it later, they will use it” (Participant 17, pg. 12). “They just have a different way to solve problems and it's fun to watch them process and come up with their problem solving results” (Participant 7, pg. 3).

They were the first ones who would come up with the answer or they'll come up with different answer than you have thought of. So, you're like, ‘Yeah, that makes sense, yeah’, and you start to leaning more towards their idea than your

own idea. And when they're able to do that, it's like okay, that's the higher thinking skills than the rest of the classroom. ...They were able just to develop the comprehensive and the skills faster than anybody. Just like, they picked it up right away. And they kind of got bored. You could tell when they were bored.

(Participant 5, pg. 2)

"I'm like, okay, 99 percent of the rest of the kids are not functioning on this yet and you've got it figured out...and they're into something that an adult would be into, you know, in content and then the level of understanding" (Participant 1, pg. 2).

Angela has taught a few students she believed were gifted. In describing Elena, Angela said, "she was one of those students that really amazed you. You present her a math problem and she was immediately solving everything. She was really sharp, just brilliant. I think that could be a GT student" (Participant 16, pg. 7). Isabel was quiet but a strong reader. "She would get, you know, the big chapter novels and she read everything in Spanish in our library and then I got her started her on some simple English" (Participant 1, pg. 4).

Colon G. definitely, I was amazed that he didn't qualify or he wasn't identified, I should say. Because he came in knowing how to spell some amazing words, that the rest of first grade didn't. He had comprehension like crazy, I mean, you would ask him a question and he would go beyond that question. He would just tell you. And he went and changed the ending of the story. (Participant 5, pg. 3)

Lujuana F., incredible student. One of those -- I can tell you that she is one of those people that is just innately brilliant. It was just born in her and she has developed it. ...She had a lovely mother who did not speak English, a step-mother. She'd sit here and translate everything during our conferences. If she missed anything, like she had ear problems, I believe. So, she missed some school. No one could help her at home with anything, but she was able to stay right up with whatever we were doing. Just an amazing young lady, Lujuana.

(Participant 7, pg. 5)

“Melisenda A., she was very good student. She was very quiet but she writes very good and she was good,” (Participant 13, pg. 5). Angela described a number of these students as shy or quiet, though “brilliant.”

She also saw characteristics of giftedness in Chale F.

I remember him. I think he was that impression to me was a pretty smart boy. He was showing, I don't know, whatever work we were doing in class, he easily grasped the concept and he liked to work for that. I remember him because he was able to use previous knowledge and concepts that we already used in other topics and apply them to new situations, that's Chale F. He had some problems with relationships, with students, some teachers. They said he was lazy a lot, lazy and that was not my perception. (Participant 17, pg. 1)

Chale liked to help other students when he finished early. Yet another of Angela's students, Castel, did not want to be identified. She believed he didn't want to stand out. “He understood very well in math and science but he knew that he was labeled as a

smart person and that the system is trying to identify them and give them more work because they are able to do that” (Participant 17, pg. 2). Angela was even more impressed with his ability when she discovered his parents were not reading with him or helping him at home.

I notice Castel P. sometimes not only understood things fast but also he was ahead of even teaching. Before I said something, he was figuring out how to solve a problem different ways, not only one but a different way. So, this is another thing I saw. I noticed in Castel P. that he found different ways to solve the same problem and also just think, he thought ahead. ... Actually, he also switch without any problem from one language into another. He was proficient in both languages. So, he could change from one language into another without any problem; maybe that is another trait or characteristic. (Participant 9, pg. 10)

One characteristic Angela noticed among the bilingual students she thought were GT was the constant processing of language.

I know one little boy I had that you could just see him constantly processing the language and to me, that's pretty intelligent because they weren't quite to the level -- totally to the level to converse. They could pass the test to get it out of bilingual and they could pass the test maybe to qualify for GT or maybe they hadn't been tested, but they weren't totally fluent where they could just freely think. But they had to do that, translate and think and all of that together. To me, it was incredible that they could do that. To me, that gave them almost an edge on ability because they could do that. (Participant 7, pg. 4)

Students she has observed to be GT have advanced language skills in both English and Spanish, and sometimes are argumentative. Angela suggested that one characteristic unique to GT bilingual students is the ability to translate orally in the third or fourth grade. She had three or four students with that ability and believed them to be GT.

“They can translate and they can translate effectively, not just the meaning of the words, but the context, the feeling, they’ve got the whole gamut there and that’s an incredibly complex and taxing process” (Participant 1, pg. 8). She also noted that there are some transitional issues as bilingual students move into GT classrooms where English is the primary language.

It's a hard transition for them, just period coming out of bilingual. It's a hard transition and then to be put into a group of maybe not accepting kids.

Sometimes the GT kids are not well accepting of new students or students who have never been part of our group. (Participant 7, pg. 9)

She noted that non-GT bilingual students seem to manage the transition better, as they return to their bilingual friends to eat lunch or play at recess. The GT bilingual kids do not, as if they do not fit in either group.

When looking for students to refer for the GT program, Angela looks for several characteristics.

I am looking for a student who is, number one, pro-active. He tries to get involved in the work. Number two, that I see growing and how that student goes from something basic knowledge and how he is developing to mastering the objective and without forgetting the basics that he's learning all the whole thing,

not just learning a new thing and forgetting the other one. ...'Cause sometime I am teaching something new, but it is related to other different things; that maybe at some point they share some levels of work. And they, 'Okay, I know to do this, so it's gonna be from me like this and then continue from these that I know from other topic.' (Participant 17, pg. 7)

“They're free thinkers, you know, they can think out of the box. You just wonder where they come up with what they're coming up with” (Participant 7, pg. 2).

This year I have a student that I really believe that he is GT, he is a hard worker, he always wants to learn more and more, he is a good helper for the rest of the kids. He participates a lot in the classroom. He loves to read and he is able to reach all the details in the stories, he is reading levels 30 and up with perfect comprehension. He is very good at math. (Participant 18, pg. 1)

She noted that GT students often finish their work faster than others in the classroom.

“He understood things very quickly and then he became finished because he needed more new things to learn. That is why in one way I identified the gifted children” (Participant 9, pg. 2).

I look for kids that are competitive a little bit, that solve problems in unique ways, that are dependable but maybe just a little bit of a maverick. You know what I'm talking about. Course creativity is real important. Let's see, kids who don't have to be told to read a higher level library book that just want to, problem solvers. (Participant 2, pg. 8)

She also compares children's performances and abilities to determine which students to refer for GT testing.

I just compare students and I compare my students with other students in different classrooms and either, you know, like usually we'll pick like the GT class of kids, the higher kids. They might not be GT, but they're higher. And then you tend to compare how they're doing and how the GT class is doing. And you know, you see if your child is capable of doing the same work or maybe that child should be in the higher group instead of the lower group, but that that's what I do. (Participant 5, pg. 9)

Angela described students she had referred in the past as hardworking with high grades, as leaders in the classroom, as students who ask questions and are kind.

The lack of a formal language is the primary barrier that Angela identified as keeping bilingual students from being identified as GT. "If [Lujana's] not identified, it has to be a language thing. Had to be" (Participant 7, pg. 7). "I think it's part of the vocabulary" (Participant 5, pg. 5). "I know it's not their ability. I know it's not their analysis, and as I look at it, I think it's because their language hasn't quite reached the level that the testing requires for them to pass" (Participant 1, pg. 2).

I think that the Hispanic people here will have some disadvantage because the language is something that it's in our way, you know. People here came from Mexico or other countries that speak Spanish. The Spanish is their first language but they want to learn English. They want their life here and they begin mixing English with Spanish and when they get into school, they don't speak the

language that's in school, the formal English or the formal Spanish. And I think that limits the GT bilingual students, they are going to be limited in that.

(Participant 16, pg. 13)

She clarifies that while it may seem that students are becoming fluent in English, it is not in academic English. "The teacher just models maybe some academic language, but most of the language that the students have is street language and they have it but that is not the language that is best. So, sometimes they are not successful on test in English"

(Participant 17, pg. 6). Not only is the lack of a formal language a problem for the student, but the range of dialects interferes with the administration and accuracy of tests in Spanish. The main problem is that students from different Spanish speaking countries and different areas of those countries speak different dialects. She is concerned that tests and test administrators fail to take the different dialects into account. "If you don't recognize different dialects, a kid is going to effectively tell you what something is in their own language but the test's going to count them wrong because it doesn't recognize enough dialects" (Participant 1, pg. 3).

A third barrier Angela discussed was the lack of experience and exposure of many bilingual students, which could affect test performance. "They don't have the experience which might even cause 'em not to score quite as high sometimes. I don't know. Now experience does matter in so many things, in so many tests" (Participant 7, pg. 3). Angela also noted that identifying and serving GT students is not a priority of many bilingual teachers who teach large numbers of students with below average skills. "You know, we don't have too many gifted here. We have a lot of low students... Gifted

and talented is something—I'm not saying that it's not important, it is. ...But as a teacher, we are really concerned about the lower levels” (Participant 16, pg. 15). This, coupled with bilingual students’ parents not referring their children, results in few bilingual students being tested for the GT program.

When discussing her ideas for improvements in the GT identification process, Angela asked for training on what to watch for and some activities to do in the classroom so she has something concrete on which to base her referrals.

It would be a good idea to type a kind of test, some test with a particular hard or not exactly hard question but some question chosen in order to show a student how a student thought in case he or she is a GT student. (Participant 9, pg. 11)

We do observation, how do we think we feel about this, but the only tangible thing that we have is the weekly test score, and even some students get 100 and we don't think of them as GT. So, we don't have something more tangible to try to identify those kids, those students. (Participant 17, pg. 8)

Perhaps one of these activities might be a translation. “If you give ‘em a few sentences and you say they can translate ‘em orally, with proper context and feeling and level of formality, they’re doing amazing things. That’s extremely complex difficult lessons” (Participant 1, pg. 9). She emphasized the need for the translations to be evaluated by teachers who are familiar with many different Spanish dialects. Angela also suggested that using high level activities regularly in the classroom might lead to more students being identified for GT. “They wouldn’t qualify this year but maybe eventually if you

keep on teaching them that way and those activities and stuff, maybe they'll start developing and maybe in second or maybe in third grade they'll be able to qualify" (Participant 5, pg. 10). In addition, the identification process could use portfolios to demonstrate students' performances. "I could put together a portfolio on a couple of these kids and it would show you those abilities I'm telling you about" (Participant 1, pg. 3).

While she hasn't had any GT training, Angela does list specific characteristics of students she thinks of as gifted. These characteristics include being excited about new learning, grasping new concepts quickly and being able to apply them in new situations, as well as connect new learning with previous learning. They have good comprehension and can solve problems in multiple ways. She watches for students who are ahead of others in her classroom, answer differently than expected or than others in the room, read on their own, and complete their work quickly. She has observed a division within the bilingual community regarding how quickly students should exit the program. She believes being bilingual is an asset and wants students to develop a strong start in Spanish so they can maintain their first language as they transition into English. Angela sees language as the biggest barrier in the GT identification process, both the students' lack of a formal language and the complexities of the numerous dialects in Spanish. She would like to see activities developed to help her determine which students to refer and suggested adding performance measures like portfolios and translations to improve the identification process.

SUMMARY

Hortencia, Marisol, and Angela describe gifted bilingual students as standing out in their classrooms. They describe many of these students as leaders, top performers, and as students who would respond in unexpected and unusual ways. These students learned quickly and had advanced language skills. They each believe that despite a lack of training in gifted education, a teacher can just see it when a student is gifted. They also all value bilingual ability. Each mentioned the importance of students' keeping their Spanish abilities, and Marisol and Angela specifically mentioned the benefits of being bilingual. When it comes to the issue of barriers to identification, all three name language as the primary barrier. Hortencia mentioned that translations from English to Spanish often result in more difficult text which would make a translated test more difficult, and she mentioned that students come to her classroom with a wide variety of Spanish backgrounds. Marisol also mentioned the inequity of translated tests. She spoke at length about how language is linked with thinking and culture. The language of each culture varies with the experiences of the people of the culture, and therefore a test designed in one language would be inequitable for someone from another culture. Simply translating the test does not bridge the cultural gap. Angela's reflection on the language issue is that many of her students do not have a formal language. They do not fully understand Spanish, nor do they fully understand English. Without a formal language, they will not perform well on tests. She also spoke at length about issues related to the various dialects of Spanish.

Ideas on improving the identification process surfaced in the interviews. Marisol suggested teachers prepare students for testing similar to what is offered to prepare students for the SAT. She also suggested testing students multiple years until they qualify. Angela concurred with the idea of continuing to test students teachers believe may be GT. Hortencia recommended identifying students early to help form a peer a group for gifted bilingual students. Marisol suggested grouping high ability students together, and Angela suggested developing referral tools to help teachers determine which students are more likely to need GT services.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

EMERGENT THEMES

In reviewing all the unitized data, four themes emerge:

- 1) Teachers believe that gifted bilingual students exhibit advanced language ability, particularly in the area of reading.
- 2) Teachers base their decisions to refer students for the gifted and talented program based predominantly upon their experiences.
- 3) Teachers believe that language is the reason bilingual students are not identified for the gifted and talented program, including the lack of students' language development and the unusually high level of language required on standardized tests.
- 4) Teachers believe the best way to improve the identification of bilingual students as gifted and talented is to prepare them for the standardized testing and to test them more often.

Emergent Theme 1 - Teachers believe that gifted bilingual students exhibit advanced language ability particularly in the area of reading

Teachers believe that gifted bilingual students exhibit advanced language ability. When describing the characteristics of students they believe were gifted, including those not officially labeled as gifted, teachers overwhelmingly described the students as

strong readers. All but three participants described students' advanced reading ability. "Sometimes we'll come to a hard word and I asked, 'Okay, does anybody know?' Student F, she always knew. Sometimes I didn't even know" (Participant 3, page 10). Mr. Ignacio described a Kindergartener, "he was one time reading almost to the second grade level in English and in Spanish" (Participant 4, page 7). Ms. Hernandez described a first grader that was brought to her attention by a literacy volunteer. The volunteer noticed the small boy checking out books on astronomy written at the fourth and fifth grade level. Repeated stories of students with advanced reading ability, including emphasis on the students' abilities to comprehend at advanced levels were told in the interviews. Participants described students who read on their own, without prompting from the teacher, students who continued to read on topics after assigned projects were concluded, and students with tested reading levels far above other students' in their classrooms.

Participants described other characteristics of advanced language ability besides reading. They talked about bilingual students who were fluent in English after very little exposure, usually emphasizing the lack of support of English development in the students' homes. When she worked with a first grader who is beginning to solidly develop English skills, Ms. Hernandez saw that as a sign of giftedness.

I guess what fascinates me the most about them is the fact that they come from two parents who do not support their other language. I mean, just because they're not capable of supporting their other language. I think that is just, it just

tells me something about the child. It's just like a red flag that says, 'Wow, how impressive!' (Participant 15, page 14)

Ms. Safstrom described students working at an English level two or more grade levels ahead of the rest of her class. She also described the beautiful Spanish some of students had developed. The students who were rapidly becoming fluent in English were able to switch languages readily and do translations, a skill which was noticed primarily during parent-teacher conferences. Participants described bilingual students they believed were gifted as having advanced language ability which included the ability to communicate at much higher levels than their peers orally, in spelling and writing, in English and Spanish, and to read well above level.

Emergent Theme 2 - Teachers base their decisions to refer students for the gifted and talented program based predominantly upon their experiences

Teachers base their decisions to refer students for the gifted and talented program based predominantly upon their experiences. Even among those participants who completed training in gifted education, the determination of who to refer for GT testing was based on their experiences working with students. Ms. Interado has completed some training, but still bases her decision on "the practical experience in the classroom, not the staff development.... I have a guess, but sometimes when you see it on daily basis, you realize that it's not just a feeling, but it's the fact of the intelligence that he's showing" (Participant 11, page 11). "I think it was just from being around the kids, ...the first day you can kind of tell almost" (Participant 6, page 7). Many of the

participants mentioned that sometimes they could just see when a student was gifted. “You can easily see when the kids are GT” (Participant 4, page 3). “You just see it. Anyone can see it” (Participant 14, page 4).

Emergent Theme 3 - Teachers believe that language is the reason bilingual students are not identified for the gifted and talented program including the lack of students’ language development and the unusually high level of language required on standardized tests

Teachers believe that language is the reason bilingual students are not identified for the gifted and talented program, including the lack of students’ language development and the unusually high level of language required on standardized tests. The language issue is very complex. It seems paradoxical that the primary characteristic that indicates giftedness, advance language ability, would be the very same element to emerge as the greatest barrier to identification. There are two parts to the barrier. First, the lack of development of formal language skills, and second, the difficulty level of the Spanish used in standardized tests.

While their students are learning English at a more rapid rate than their peers, they are not necessarily mastering formal academic English.

They learn English in four months, English to play on the playground. English to work in a classroom is a different thing and I think maybe that's one of the reasons that we don't identify a lot of GT bilingual students because they have that problem. (Participant 16, page 14).

Students and their families are exposed to casual English in their environments, on the playground, on television, and in the neighborhood. Depending upon their grade level and the philosophy of their teachers and principals, they spend only part of the school day working on academic English skills. This will significantly impact their ability to perform on standardized tests administered in English. For this reason, the school district decided to try using the BVAT which gave students opportunities to demonstrate ability in both English and Spanish. But even in Spanish, students lack the formal academic language skills to perform well on standardized tests. “That's kind of hard, you know, because a lot of them they know the street talk. They don't know the right vocabulary” (Participant 5, page 4). Ms. Loring related the lack of formal language development to the limited resources available in the U.S. as compared to those in Mexico.

They have more exposure to language and here they don't have enough materials, enough books to read and to expose them to this kind of language. And the parents don't know the vocabulary either and they don't expose their children to this kind of words. (page 7)

Without exposure to books in Spanish and a rich Spanish environment, students are not likely to develop their formal academic Spanish abilities. Zappia (1989) describes this problem as the difference between students' basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) levels and the students' cognitive academic language proficiency skills (CALPS) levels. A student's BICS level is his or her proficiency in common every day communication—what the student needs for the playground and neighborhood. A

student's CALPS level is his or her formal academic language proficiency which is needed for standardized testing. These are distinctly different pieces of language development. The discrepancy between the two is often overlooked by teachers.

To add to the complexity of language development, there is an issue with the various dialects in Spanish. Like the participants teaching in the bilingual program, the students in the program come from various Spanish-speaking countries. Each country and even region within a country may use a different dialect.

You have all these Spanishes that could affect the way a child responds to a question or whether he understands it. I have a child here from Dominican Republic and his words, it's a delight, because I'll say, 'How do you call that? What do you call--' and he'll say something else different. (Participant 15, page 10)

While the variations may be slight from the point of view of a highly educated adult, these variations are more significant to a young student learning two languages. Due to these factors, the students are performing ahead of their peers in English acquisition and reading in both languages above grade level, but they are not developing the formal language skills necessary to demonstrate giftedness on standardized exams.

The second component to the language barrier is the language used on tests. The BVAT has several different sections which assess different aspects of verbal ability. In each section, a specific answer or narrow range of answers is required to be counted as correct. The test requires verbal precision to score well. This is true of both the English

portion of the test and the portions translated into other languages. Many participants commented on the limitations of translated tests.

Many are words in English I will add, they're much harder in Spanish and when they translate it, they're very hard in the Spanish. I say, 'No, they're not gonna make it because they don't know these words.' And it's like the level is very different between the English and the Spanish. (Participant 12, page 11)

Common words in English are not necessarily common words in Spanish. "That language, it's a vocabulary that you never use" (Participant 11, page 10). Ms. Safstrom was also concerned that the dialect of the test administrator and student match, otherwise the test administrator may not recognize a correct answer. Ms. Zapada discussed the relationship of language to a culture's system of thinking. Simply translating a test does not take into account how the systems vary. "It's not the same correlation in the English system and the Spanish system. So, what makes sense in English doesn't make it in Spanish" (Participant 14, page 6). Together, the lack of formal language development in either English or Spanish and the high level of Spanish on standardized tests form a significant barrier for linguistically diverse students.

Emergent Theme 4 - Teachers believe the best way to improve the identification of bilingual students as gifted and talented is to prepare them for the standardized testing and to test them more often

Teachers believe the best way to improve the identification of bilingual students as gifted and talented is to prepare them for the standardized testing and to test them

more often. Bilingual students are rarely referred for the GT program more than once in their school careers. Once a student has not been identified, the student is not usually referred again. “They’re not detected as they’re GT or something and then they move on to the next level and the teacher chooses other kids” (Participant 11, page 12). Other populations are referred repeatedly and have multiple attempts to qualify for the GT program. This provides them repeated experience with the standardized testing and the identification process. Mr. Ignacio was the first to suggest that a solution to the under-representation of linguistically diverse students might be to test them more than once.

I don't have any hesitation that they are a potential GT students. At some point if they keep being challenged and, you know, being challenged means in school environment and the student keep performing at their high level thinking skills. So, it may not be this year, but it might be two years down the road. (Participant 4, page 5)

He went on to suggest that teachers purposefully prepare students for the tests. He was not recommending doing something to give students an unfair advantage, but to help students develop the thinking skills used on the standardized tests and to increase their familiarity with standardized testing. He likened it to the test preparation that students do for college entrance exams. Many students take the PSAT in preparation for the SAT. They also take review classes to help them develop the specific test taking skills needed for optimal performance on the SAT. In addition, students may take the SAT more than once to increase their scores. He suggested that bilingual students could be prepared for GT testing in the same way.

Nine other participants agreed that exposing bilingual students to the GT testing and purposefully preparing them for the tests would improve their likelihood of identification. “I remember encouraging parents to go ahead and continue the testing because I don't think they know to do that. So, I tried to let them know that they just continue the testing as long as the child was interested” (Participant 7, page 4). “Maybe eventually they would end up, maybe not all but maybe you would have one, end up being identified as GT” (Participant 5, page 12). “Her child didn’t qualify as such but maybe next year she might” (Participant 9, page 4).

These four themes emerged from the data collected from all participants. The themes were allowed to emerge through the repeated categorization of the units from the interviews. After numerous readings and rounds of categorization, these four themes were mentioned by participants more often than any other topics. They stand out significantly from the other categories of information by the frequency with which they were raised by the participants, both the number of participants who discussed them and the number of times they were repeated by each participant.

SUMMARY

The following questions guided this investigation and will guide the summary of findings:

1. Do teachers perceive the linguistically diverse students identified using the new measure to be gifted and talented? If so, what factors led to their being identified?

2. Are there linguistically diverse students teachers perceive to be gifted and talented who were not identified? If so, what barriers prevented their identification?

Do teachers perceive the linguistically diverse students identified using the new measure to be gifted and talented

Of the 21 students on which participation in this study is based, two were identified as gifted and talented through the use of the BVAT. Emilio, a student at Cliff Elementary, was referred for testing by Mr. Smith in third grade. Mr. Smith clearly believed Emilio demonstrated characteristics of a gifted student, which is why he referred Emilio for testing. He described Emilio as brilliant. Of the four students he referred for testing, Emilio stood apart and served as a point of comparison. Mr. Smith described gifted characteristics in the other three students and believed they were also GT, but he usually conditioned his reply with a statement that they were not quite as extreme as Emilio.

There was a big difference between Emilio and the other three and in grades, in behavior, in general. Emilio was a leader. He was a helper, he likes to help people. He was helping lot of people to improve their skill and he was very good student, hard working..... As a leader, in all of the grades, all of the subjects he was remarkable—language arts, math and science—in each and every field, and of course, bilingual. He was good in both languages. (Participant 10, page 2)

Ms. Zot taught Emilio the year after he was tested and identified as gifted and talented. She believed the identification was accurate, that Emilio was clearly a GT student. When he was identified, he qualified to exit the bilingual program, so Ms. Zot taught him in a non-bilingual GT classroom.

He liked to help and when it was time, like I said, to do projects, he always went kind of above what was expected. Even though he was in my class and it was his first time in an all English classroom and he may have had a little struggle with the language sometimes, but once it was taught to him, you know, he quickly caught on. (Participant 6, page 2)

She described him as an active reader and quick thinker. Having just transitioned out of the bilingual program, he occasionally needed help with the mechanics of writing, but his ideas and concepts were on target.

Savanna was the other student identified as gifted and talented. Savanna was referred by her first grade teacher at Pheasant Elementary. Ms. Hernandez referred two students from her classroom that year, Savanna and Elvira. While she believed both girls demonstrated potential giftedness, she felt that Elvira was likely to be more gifted than Savanna; however, Elvira was not identified. Ms. Hernandez also taught Savanna's oldest sister who was gifted. Whenever she was asked to specifically describe Savanna's characteristics, she described Savanna's sister's extreme abilities. "Savanna R. is bright but she's not, she's not like [her sister]" (Participant 15, page 7). Ms. Hernandez would also make comparisons to Elvira. "Elvira is a little more advanced, she's a little more meticulous than Savanna would be; however, it was my

understanding that Savanna, though, was the one who did well on the test” (Participant 15, page 7).

Ms. Ingle, Savanna’s second grade teacher, was not confident that Savanna was really gifted. She believed she was performing ahead of her peers, but not to the degree required for the GT label.

It came easy to her, learning is easy for her but compared to children who learning was difficult, it pushed her higher. She’s a good student. She’s not a great student. I don’t mean necessarily just in performance. I mean in just ability to pick up things, hear it once, not have it repeated several times. (Participant 2, page 4)

Ms. Ingle was perplexed because Savanna was identified but Elvira was not, and she clearly saw characteristics of giftedness in Elvira. Mr. Nozaro also taught Savanna in second grade. Savanna spent part of the day in Ms. Ingle’s GT class and part of the day in Mr. Nozaro’s bilingual class. At Pheasant Elementary, this was not an unusual arrangement, as they often allowed high performing bilingual students to spend part of the day in an English-only classroom, particularly for instruction in reading. Mr. Nozaro noticed Savanna’s advanced reading skills. She was able to read at an advanced level in both English and Spanish. He also described her as a hard worker. Mr. Nozaro did not question Savanna’s identification as gifted.

While Emilio’s teachers clearly believed his identification was on target, Savanna’s teachers were less confident. Both of his teachers commented on his advanced language ability, particularly his reading ability, his leadership qualities, and

his ability to learn new concepts very quickly. Only one of Savanna's teachers was able to describe her abilities without negatively comparing them with other students, and he highlighted her language ability. Two of her teachers felt that she had above average ability, particularly in language, but that she needed more repetition than what they expected of a gifted student. It is notable that all of these participants described the students as primarily having advanced language ability, particularly in reading, which is one of the emergent themes of this study.

Are there linguistically diverse students teachers perceive to be gifted and talented who were not identified

Nineteen of the 21 students on which participation in this study was based were not identified as gifted, although most were referred by their teachers. The teachers of six of these students agree that they are gifted, despite their not being identified. Two of Elvira's teachers strongly believe she should have been identified as gifted. Her third teacher recognizes characteristics of giftedness in her, but was uncomfortable saying the testing was wrong. Ms. Hernandez taught Elvira at Pheasant Elementary in first grade. Elvira was one student used as the basis of comparison for Ms. Hernandez. She noticed that Elvira learned very rapidly. "She didn't have to work at it. ... It was just automatic for Elvira" (Participant 15, page 7). Ms. Ingle, Elvira's second grade teacher, also noticed this about Elvira.

She's got that special something I can just recognize, one of those things you can't put your hand on it, hang your hat on it but you know, when you're dealing

with one after all the years of working with them. You said it once, said even half of it. She picked it up. She got the point. She went right on down the road.

(Participant 2, page 4).

Mr. Nozaro, Elvira's second grade bilingual teacher, described her advanced language abilities and her ability to think both creatively and critically. When these participants were asked what they thought prevented Elvira's identification, they were unable to be specific. Both Ms. Hernandez and Ms. Ingle seemed to be a loss for how Savanna could have been identified and Elvira was not. Ms. Ingle finally commented that Elvira must have just had a bad day, and Ms. Hernandez mentioned test anxiety. They really felt Elvira had the ability and the characteristics of a gifted student and should have been able to demonstrate that on the test. None of the teachers mentioned language as a reason she did not qualify, which seems unusual as that is one of the emergent themes of this study.

Two of Isabel's three teachers believe she should have been identified as gifted. The third teacher saw her as gifted in music, but not academically. Ms. Interado referred Isabel for the GT program at Cliff Elementary when she was in third grade. She described Isabel as a very strong reader and as a student who needed to be pushed to perform at her highest ability. Without prompting and encouragement, Isabel was satisfied with an adequate job that matched her peers, rather than performing at a level commiserate with her abilities. Ms. Safstrom, Isabel's fourth grade teacher noticed her advanced reading ability. "She was a book reader, she would get the big chapter novels and she read everything in Spanish in our library and then I got her started her on some

simple English, but she was the reader” (Participant 1, page 4). Isabel’s abilities were well above those of the rest of her class. Mr. Ortiz taught Isabel in both fourth and fifth grade. He thought she had advanced abilities in the area of music after watching her perform in the school’s band and choir, but he did not see her as gifted academically. “There’s something that is missing for me to see her like this student is GT. I don’t what it is” (Participant 17, page 3). It may be that she was not highly able in math, which is the subject Mr. Ortiz taught, rather her area of giftedness may have been in language arts. If this was the case, he might not see characteristics of giftedness displayed in his classroom.

Both Mr. Smith and Mr. Xapato, Castel’s teachers at Cliff Elementary describe him as a gifted student who should have been identified. Mr. Smith referred him for the GT program in third grade after watching his advanced math abilities and his strong comprehension. Castel also participated in the school’s bilingual spelling bee and won, defeating students older than he. “Castel P. was gifted as I saw it, he will go places, intelligent, smart” (Participant 10, page 2). Castel performed at very high levels on bilingual language assessments, but Mr. Smith wondered if his language development kept him from being identified. Although he was performing at high levels on local assessments in the classroom, it might not have been extreme enough for the GT tests. Mr. Xapato, Castel’s fourth grade teacher, did not have ideas on why Castel wasn’t identified, but he clearly believed Castel should have been.

I notice Castel P. sometimes not only understood things fast but also he was ahead -- ahead of even teaching before I said something, he was figuring out

how to solve a problem different ways, not only one but a different way.... he also, switch without any problem from one language into another. He was proficient in both languages. So, he could change from one language into another without any problem. (Participant 9, page 10)

Mr. Smith, Ms. Safstrom, and Mr. Ortiz all agreed that Chale should have been identified as gifted, too. Mr. Smith referred Chale and Ms. Safstrom and Mr. Ortiz taught Chale in fourth grade after he was not identified. Mr. Smith wondered if Chale was not identified in part because he had trouble being still and slowing down. He tended to do things too fast, which affected his accuracy. Despite this, Mr. Smith believed Chale to be highly intelligent. Like Castel, Chale had advanced language abilities and performed at high levels on bilingual assessments. Ms. Safstrom described Chale as a student who picked things up very quickly. "Chale was the one, half way through the explanation, 'Oh I got it. You mean it works this way'" (Participant 1, page 4). She also noticed he was very active. She described him as being "all out there." Mr. Ortiz also commented on Chale's ability to grasp new information quickly.

Whatever work we were doing in class, he easily grasped the concept and he liked to work for that. I remember him because he was able to use previous knowledge and concepts that we already used in other topics and apply them to new situations, that's Chale. (Participant 17, page 1)

The participants did not give specific feedback on why Chale was not identified. They spoke in general terms about language ability and the language on the tests.

At Pheasant Elementary, Ms. Pena and Ms. Orland believed that Lujana did not qualify for the GT program due to her language skills. Ms. Pena also wondered if her shyness might have affected her performance on the BVAT since it was administered by a teacher she with whom she was unfamiliar. Neither participant questioned whether she was gifted. Ms. Pena referred Lujana for testing in fourth grade because she as “very sharp” and a “top student.” Although she was very quiet, Ms. Pena saw that she was “very academically inclined and capable, just an outstanding student” (Participant 8, page 3). Lujana did well on the state writing assessment in English and was such a strong student that a nearby district recruited her the following year. Ms. Orland had very strong descriptions of Lujana. “I can tell you that she is one of those people that is just innately brilliant” (Participant 7, page 5). According to Ms. Orland, Lujana was a “creative, free thinker. You could always call on her and get the right answer. She was also kind and you could just see that one day she will be such a poised success” (Participant 7, page 6). While in Ms. Orland’s class in fifth grade, Lujana had some medical problems. Despite not feeling well for an extended period of time and missing school, Lujana was able to keep up and not get behind her classmates academically. Ms. Orland felt strongly that Lujana needed to be in the GT program so that she could fully develop her potential, especially as she moved in to middle school. Her only explanation for Lujana not being identified was language.

Ms. Interado and Ms. Loring believe that the gifted students they have taught did not qualify for the GT program because the level of testing is too high and not equivalent in Spanish. Their comments both contributed to the emergent theme that

language is the primary barrier. This is despite their observations that Sierra had advanced language skills, particularly in Spanish. Ms. Loring taught Sierra in second grade and Ms. Interado taught her in third grade. Ms. Loring recognized Sierra's advanced abilities, despite Sierra's trying to hide them and her not wanting to stand out from her peers. "She knows many things about many subjects and she will also answer any question.... I could see that she was different from the other ones" (Participant 12, page 1). She described Sierra's advanced reading as being well beyond others in her classroom. Sierra also could speak English quite well, but refused to do so in her classroom as she seemed to be self-conscious about it. In third grade, Ms. Interado noticed her advanced reading, too. Sierra was reading at the fifth and sixth grade level and had strong vocabulary skills. She was weaker in math. Ms. Interado also noticed that Sierra tended to want to blend in with the other students, so she pushed Sierra to apply her ability and work to perform at her highest levels.

Despite the addition of a new measure, these six students, whose teachers agree show definite characteristics of giftedness, were not identified. They were all described as having advanced language skills in keeping with the emergent themes of this study. When asked about what was keeping these students out, there were less clear answers. Rather than answer specifically about these students, the participants tended to generalize to all the students they believed were gifted yet not identified. The barrier they recognized the most was language. While the students had clearly advanced language when compared with their peers, their development of the formal language required on tests must not have been sufficient. The students' BICS levels were

different from their CALPS levels. In addition, they expressed concerns about the language on the tests used. They suggested that perhaps the language was not equivalent to English versions and that the vocabulary was outside the realm of their students' exposure. This is also an emergent theme.

CONCLUSIONS

Adding a new measure to the gifted and talented identification process for bilingual students resulted in the identification of one clearly gifted student and a second student about whom participants were unsure. It did not identify all of the students the participants agreed were gifted. The conclusion can be made that it helped in the identification process, but only marginally. This is most likely related to students' limited development of cognitive academic language proficiency skills (CALPS) which are required for optimal performance on standardized tests in any language (Zappia, 1989).

Teachers of linguistically diverse students recognize advanced language ability as one of the hallmarks of giftedness. When determining which students to refer, they look for students performing beyond their peers who are strong readers and developing English rapidly. The characteristics of giftedness participants listed were on target with characteristics common in the literature of gifted education. Generally, the teachers had a good feel for giftedness. The majority of the participants were bilingual teachers. Their ability to recognize gifted characteristics was documented by Fernandez, Gay, Lucky and Gavilan (1998) and Bermúdez and Rakow (1990). Fernandez, Gay, Lucky,

and Gavilan noted that teachers were likely to be more accurate when they knew students' backgrounds and the participants clearly demonstrated knowledge of the students' environments and home lives.

Despite language being the most common characteristic for which teachers watch, it is also the most common barrier to the identification of linguistically diverse students. Participants were concerned that their students were not developing the formal language skills (CALPS) required to perform well on GT testing and that the tests may be written at an exceptionally high level. There were considerable concerns about translating tests and the inability of tests to address the range of Spanish dialects used by their students.

The most promising way to improve the identification of linguistically diverse students is to prepare students for the standardized testing and to test them more often. Participants suggested that although a student may not test into the program one year, they should continue to be exposed to high levels of instruction and to continue developing their advanced skills which may result in their being identified at a later date. The testing process should continue for them. Providing test preparation similar to that which has been developed for college entrance exams and repeated testing may help students perform at their high ability levels and increase their likelihood of being identified as gifted. This has not been applied to GT testing like it has for other test preparation. This is a very promising idea that would be practical to implement and has the potential to make significant progress towards resolving the problem of under-representation.

FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has brought up several areas in which additional research is needed. The idea of test preparation for linguistically diverse students should be pursued as this is a promising suggestion which could make a significant impact on addressing the issue of under-representation of bilingual students in gifted programs. Activities for specific test skill development need to be developed and tested for effectiveness. This is likely to connect to old research in the talent pool concept but should be revised for today's standards of the assessments typically used in districts for GT identification purposes.

Further research is needed to determine if the range of dialects truly affects how students perform on standardized tests administered in Spanish. Certainly teachers perceive this to be a factor, but further research is needed to examine the issue on a deeper level to determine the level of impact that may be occurring.

This study also highlights the need for abilities tests developed in Spanish rather than translated from English. This need for new tests was recognized by Barkan and Bernal (1991) and Scott, Deuel, Jean-Francois, and Urbano (1996). Unfortunately, the need still exists. The range of assessments available is very limited and primarily includes translated tests, and particularly achievement tests. As the population of native Spanish speakers grows in the United States, and certainly in Texas, the need for assessments in Spanish grows. These assessments would be beneficial in all aspects of the educational system, including gifted and talented programs.

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APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Tell me about teaching gifted or linguistically diverse students.
2. Tell me about linguistically diverse students you have taught that you think were gifted.
3. Were they nominated (referred) for testing? If not, why not.
4. Were there linguistically diverse students who were tested that you were surprised did not qualify? What do you think prevented the identification?
5. Tell me about X (a student identified as GT who was in the bilingual program at the time he/she was referred and tested). He/she was identified as gifted. Do you think he/she is gifted? What are the characteristics you see that lead you to believe that?

OR

- Tell me about Y (a student who was in the bilingual program at the time he/she was nominated and tested for GT but did not qualify). He/she was not identified but was tested. Do you think he/she is gifted? What are the characteristics you see that lead you to believe that? What do you think prevented his/her identification?
6. How successful do you think X has been in the GT program? What about strengths and weaknesses? Differences in content areas?
 7. How did you develop your understanding of giftedness? What has helped you identify students to refer for GT testing?

8. Is there anything else about identifying and serving gifted linguistically diverse students you want to share with me or discuss?

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